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THE INDEPENDENT

FRIDAY 8 NOVEMBER 1996

WEATHER: Sunny, mild, with light rain

(M45P) 40p

Yes, the answer to the universe really is 42

Charles Arthur
Science Editor

It seems that Douglas Adams was right after all: the answer to the Life, the Universe and Everything, is 42.

Cambridge astronomers have found that 42 is the value of an essential scientific constant - one which determines the age of the universe.

In his novel, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, Mr Adams describes how an alien race programs a com-

puter called Deep Thought to provide the ultimate answer to "Life, the Universe and Everything". After six and a half million years' calculation, back came the answer - 42.

In slightly less time - two years - a team at the Cavendish Laboratory has managed the same feat, using a new technique to estimate the value of the "Hubble Constant". This measures how quickly objects in the universe are receding from each other - a natural outcome of the Big Bang that cre-

ated the universe. Dr Richard Saunders, who led the research, rounded a truly staggered by the result. "We have taken two measurements for the constant, and the average of them is, well, it's 42," he said. But he insisted this is "entirely fortuitous" - though thousands of fans of the *Hitchhiker* novels might disagree.

Mr Adams said yesterday that when he wrote the novel 20 years ago he chose the number especially for its bathetic nature. "I wanted a nice, ordi-

nary number, one that you wouldn't mind taking home and introducing to your parents."

But later he realised that the choice was no accident: in 1972, when he was working for John Cleeve's film company, Video Arts, as a "prop borrower", he and the other writers picked 42 for its amusing qualities as the punchline in the closing scene.

The Hubble Constant indicates the age of the universe because if we know

how quickly everything is flying apart, we can work out how long ago it was all together at the same point - like working out how long a film has been running by measuring the film and knowing how many frames per second it shows.

Astronomers have bickered for decades about the constant's value, calculating it to be anywhere between 20 and 80. But large values imply that the universe is younger than its oldest stars - a logical conundrum which

the new value avoids, said Dr Saunders, as it puts the universe's age at about 16 billion years.

The Cambridge team produced the measurement by combining data from X-ray telescopes with information about cosmic background radiation, leftover energy in space from Big Bang. Dr Saunders insists future revisions will alter the value of the constant from its present, somewhat vague. That would suit Mr Adams: "It does come up awfully often," he said.

Saturday's
INDEPENDENT
A bigger
and better
newspaper



The Magazine
A celebration of
the pleasures of
reading and
writing

eye
The Eye
Everything you
need to know for a
week's arts, TV
and entertainment



The Long
Weekend
The best in books,
travel and leisure



In the picture: David Cameron, looking at a portrait of his grandfather, Lord Cameron, in a room at Downing Street. The room is being prepared for an exhibition which opens today, entitled 'The Art of the Picture Frame'. Photograph: John Voos

Parliament is sinking fast, warns Lord Nolan

Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

Lord Nolan, the Government-appointed guardian of standards in public life, last night urged MPs to stand up for themselves, put their own House in order, and take action to improve the standards of government.

The dramatic intervention took the chairman of the powerful Committee on Standards in Public Life deep into highly charged political territory. He said Parliament had been undermined by the European Union, pressure for devolution, the party whipping system - and Commons sleaze.

Tracking the decline of Westminster from post-war "Imperial Parliament" towards offshore regional assembly, Lord Nolan said the contrast between 1946 and 1996 highlighted the "uncertainty about the present-day role and status of Parliament."

The Law Lord said the Commons had shown its readiness to implement changes that

MEPs rattle the bowl

What started as a clampdown on the abuse of perks by members of the European Parliament could end up as a massive financial boost for British MEPs.

They hope that the clampdown will lead to the harmonisation of MEPs' salaries - and that could double or triple the salaries of the Britons in Strasbourg. British MEPs currently receive much smaller salaries than most of their European counterparts. Karl

Haensch, the president of the parliament, yesterday endorsed the proposals for the salaries to be harmonised.

The latest move to reform the generous perks regime comes in the wake of a documentary shown last month on ITV. The programme used hidden cameras to show MEPs signing on for their £175 per diem allowance on a Friday morning, before promptly leaving Strasbourg to go home.

Report, page 15

vice Committee said Ministers agreed on the need for an all-party resolution of Parliament, making explicit how it expects Ministers to discharge their responsibilities to Parliament.

It then added, however, that the wording suggested by the Committee - ensuring that civil servants should be just as answerable as Ministers - was "unacceptable".

The second example of Whitehall's attitude to Parliament came in a response to the call of two Commons committees for more open government: rejecting a Freedom of Information Act and refusing access to original versions of official papers. Derek Foster, the Opposition spokesman on Whitehall, said last night: "Greater access to government information ought to be an entitlement for every citizen. What are they afraid of?"

But Lord Nolan's analysis of the demise of Parliament suggested that the only way that MPs could re-establish their reputation was by standing up for themselves, and fighting



their corner against over-mighty Ministers and the political machines that drag on backbench lobby fodder.

In the first of three Radcliffe Lectures delivered at Warwick University, he said: "Parliament is being squeezed from a number of directions. Europe is one. Ministers still have the power of veto over Brussels decisions, except where qualified majority voting has been conceded, but Parliament has not

"Parliament is also being squeezed from below. One of the consequences of greater stability within western Europe is a reduction in the bonds of necessity which unite the nation state. Nationalism and regionalism is being encouraged by Europe and the direction of funds. "So while as a matter of law, Parliament's ultimate sovereignty remains intact," he said, "its influence has diminished."

Lord Nolan also dealt with the issue which is closer to the remit of his own standards committee - parliamentary sleaze. With investigations at present taking place into allegations about the Conservative MP Neil Hamilton, and an alleged attempt to interfere with an investigation of a select committee into allegations made against him, Lord Nolan warned against any attempt to sweep anything under the carpet.

He said: "The investigation which is now in progress, in what I might call the Hamilton case, is going to be the most difficult conceivable test for the new machinery..."

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Major raps 'hopeless' Tory HQ

Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

The Prime Minister told Tory MPs at a private dinner that he will not bow to pressure from Conservative Central Office to adopt a more Euro-sceptic policy as a vote winner for the general election.

John Major is said to have criticised Central Office at a dinner given by pro-European Tory MPs for the Prime Minister at the Athenaeum Club.

It was supposed to be entirely off the record, and the Prime Minister was said to have been in a very relaxed mood. But *The Independent* has learned that Mr Major's remarks were seen as clear criticism of Central Office. "He said Central Office was 'hopeless', one source said. "He said it three times, and really emphasised the point."

Other sources who were there disputed that version of events. "He didn't use the word 'hopeless', he said that we should not be too worried about the Central Office," one source said. "He was saying that the Central Office was not to be feared."

The MPs who attended the dinner on Monday night were united in saying that the Prime Minister gave a clear message that he will resist the pressure which is expected to intensify to rule out any prospect of Britain joining the first wave of a single currency.

There has been tension throughout the summer between Downing Street and Central Office over the handling of the European issue until the highly successful party conference, when a show of unity by the Cabinet over Europe was

staged by Brian Mawhinney, the party chairman. That was intended to end the open disputes in the party over Europe and focus attention on winning the election. Dr Mawhinney won Mr Major's praise for the skill with which he mounted the conference.

But the disclosure that pro-

European Tory MPs remain worried about the influence of Central Office undermines the fragility of the unity in the party over the single currency.

Tory Euro-sceptics are pressing for the Government to rule out entry into a first wave of a single currency before the general election on the ground that Germany and France are "fudging" the convergence criteria for entry.

Dick Spring, the Irish Foreign minister, yesterday said in London that the Dublin summit in December would stick to the timetable for a second Exchange Rate Mechanism, prior to the single currency, which could increase the pressure by the Euro-sceptics for Britain to slow the move to Economic and Monetary Union. The pro-European Tory MPs privately feared that Central Office would be driven

by opinion poll evidence to suggest a more Euro-sceptic stance would win more votes, and outflank Tony Blair's Labour Party at the election.

They used their dinner to seek a case-iron reassurance from the Prime Minister that in the run-up to the general election, Mr Major would not allow the Government to close off Britain's option to join a single currency. "We strongly welcomed what he had to say on that. He was very firm. There will be absolutely no shift from our position."

Spring warns Major, page 2
48-hour promise, page 6

QUICKLY
\$5m signing
Chelsea last night agreed a club record fee of £5m for the Italian international midfielder Gianfranco Zola, 30, who plays for Parma.
Page 28

Orphan must go
A Nepalese man rescued from poverty and brought up by a British millionaire in a Gloucestershire castle yesterday lost his fight to stay.
Page 8

Goldsmith setback
Sir James Goldsmith's European-wide party collapsed in a humiliating setback for the tycoon's campaign against the present constitution of the European Union.
Page 6

BBC under fire
ITV and Channel 4 said that the BBC should withdraw its statement of promises, published on Tuesday, on what they claimed were misrepresentations and inaccuracies were removed.
Page 5

INSTRUMENTS FOR PROFESSIONALS

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Carnaby Street sold for £90m

Carnaby Street, the mecca of fashion, music and culture in London's swinging Sixties, has been sold for £90m.

The area, which is now a mainly a haunt for foreign tourists, has been bought by the property company, Shalesbury, from the Dutch company, Wereldhave.

The area in and around Carnaby Street includes shops and studios but in the 1960s it was home to men's fashion boutiques in an era when acceptable dress included pink frilly shirts and crushed velvet jackets.

The Carnaby Estate will join the 120 shops and restaurants the company already owns in central London.

Catholic 'cult' censured

A Roman Catholic movement accused of cult-like behaviour has been severely criticised and limited in its activities by the diocese of Clifton, which covers most of the West Country.

Although the movement claims the support of the Pope, the diocesan enquiry says its methods have "caused individuals harm." The Neocatechumenate, a movement founded by two Spaniards in 1965, had brought disunity and decline to the three parishes in Gloucester and Bristol where it had been introduced, according to a report published yesterday by the diocese. *Andrew Brown*

Dorrell targets council care homes

The Government is expected to propose far-reaching reforms to end local authority ownership of homes for children and the elderly.

Stephen Dorrell, the Secretary of State for Health, is to propose in a White Paper in February that the homes should be taken over by a separate agency, with the local authorities left to "purchase" care of the elderly and children.

Whitehall sources stressed it would not mean closing down homes with the loss of thousands of jobs, but those working in such homes will be concerned. *Colin Brown*

Medals for Bosnia braves

A 19-year old private who fired back at Serb troops to help his colleagues and cover has become the youngest British soldier ever to be mentioned for bravery in dispatches. The gallantry award for Matthew Mitchell, of the 2nd Battalion the Light Infantry, was one of several for service in Bosnia announced last night.

The highest award – the Air Force Cross – went to an army pilot who was flying a Navy helicopter. Squadron Major David Meyer, 34, won his award for landing a bomb disposal party in the middle of a minefield "in appalling and hazardous conditions" on 28 January after a Spartan armoured troop carrier was destroyed by a mine.

Tonsorially challenged reach for the roots

Sex and authenticity, that's what I was looking for yesterday. The allegation that the Bishop of Sedgefield had been receiving counselling for an insincere haircut, and was failing to "connect" with women voters, has sent shock-waves reverberating around the House. "If Beauty Blair isn't doing it for women", the unspoken thought has run, "then what chance have I got?" So, had bouffant hairdos been chopped overnight? Would Michael Portillo next be seen with a De-pardieu shag-cut, five o'clock shadow and a Gauloise hanging from his lower lip? Were we to be treated to a series of junior ministers making tearful speeches about their relationships with their mothers? Well, the first thing I saw as I sat in the gallery was Derek Conway (Con, Shrewsbury and Atcham), standing there at the Bar of the House, wearing a frock-coat and clutching what appeared to be a billiard cue. Was this not taking authenticity a little too far, I wondered aloud to my neighbour – could



DAVID AARONOVITCH

Conway not have left the cue at the pub? No, it was explained to me patiently, Mr Conway (a government whip) is Vice-Chamberlain to Her Majesty's Household, and that is his staff of office. Once a week he reports to the Queen on happenings in Parliament, and then comes back and stands there. By now it was time for Home Office questions, and I examined all on view purely in terms of their physical appeal for one section of the electorate or another. Down whose spine does Michael Howard send a delicious shiver?

Who goes to WH Smith and asks for posters of Jack Straw to decorate their bedrooms? Is there a section of our diffuse

population with the specialist tastes necessary for a proper appreciation of Anne Widdecombe? How many PVC fetishists are there out there, anyway?

Peter Griffiths (Con, Portsmouth North) had his eyes on minorities when he argued for those who "shoot with muzzle-loading, flint-lock or match-lock pistols" not to be penalised by the new firearms Bill.

So if anyone you know is killed in a duel this year, blame Peter. The buxom Brummie Conservative Dame Jill Knight, defended Freemasons' from Labour, arguing that "what a gentleman chooses to do in his spare time is unimportant". Particularly if one trouser leg is

rolled up, and one nipple exposed. It was all very stuffy, by Commons standards, but nothing to what came later in Prime Minister's Question Time.

With John Major away in Bordeaux (the place for aromatherapy), and Tony off getting a facial (Clarins please, the others bring me out in spots), it was Hezza versus Prezza. Theoretically the Deputy Prime Minister – whose hair is not so much bouffant as exploding – should be doing badly in the sex stakes.

Few can possibly take so much trouble as he does. But it is all theatrical overstatement, natural – childlike almost – in its ebullience.

The de-bouffant Mr Prescott,

by contrast, cannot be accused of over-attention to his hair, his ties, or his suit.

If his uneven and asymmetrical toussure, with its half-fringe, cost him more than £250 at Bert's Brilliantine Barber's Shop, then he's been robbed. And that, of course is precisely what the wily Prescott wants us to think.

In fact, authentic, scruffy haircuts and clothes for politicians cost an absolute fortune from specialist branches of DKNY, and are the true marks of vanity.

I beg your pardon? What did they actually say? I don't know; this is a political column, not some heavy policy analysis. Try the *Daily Star*.

Sign of the times as Fergie saga fails to titillate readers

Clare Garner

The foreigners ignored it; the British deplored it. Newsy Buny gave it the thumbs-up but few others found a kind word.

Hardback copies of Fergie: *Her Secret Life* hit bookshelves yesterday amid a spectacularly damp-squib author-signing session. "The Book She Tried To Burn" looked set to become *The Book He Failed To Sell*, as customers turned their backs on Allan Starkie's "sensational" revelations.

"I've got other things to study," said Nerika Pinto, a Portuguese student, as she left Oxford Street's Dillons with a an English dictionary. A passer-by, Peter Mayberry, said: "I'm an Australian and I'm not very interested in the lady."

The book, published by Michael O'Mara, who also bought Andrew Morton's *Diana: Her True Story*, charts the Duchess of York's relationship with her financial adviser, John Bryan, with descriptions of her sexual preferences.

Marguerite Horner was in two minds. Should she buy a signed copy for a friend's 50th birthday? "It's not so much the money, but whether it's rubbish," mused the mother of four. "It's very simply written. How much is it just a hype job? It's not something you'd want to admit to buying. It's so tacky. You know, it's so destructive, the whole thing."

In minutes, the book had become a symbol of society to Miss Horner. "It's all part of the moral decay. Everyone thinks they have a right to know what everyone else is doing. No, I won't buy it. I've talked myself out of it. Her friend would be getting a tie instead."

There were, however, two takers. Richard Kay, the *Daily Mail's* royal reporter, explained: "It's a gift." And Nicole Linay, 25, said she couldn't wait to "get divulged". "Ah, I didn't know they had colour pictures," she said, skimming her copy. "Let's face it, everyone likes a scandal. It intrigues us."

Meanwhile, the 39-year-old New Yorker who was once the Duchess's confidant; deflated his work. "It wasn't money, nor revenge, rather 'an act of confession'."

"Sometimes you have to bring your own case to the courts of humanity and see what they think. I absolutely don't think I am guilty of grubby conduct. No, I don't feel I've betrayed her. I don't want to say I've done her a great favour either. I think I've given her a fair shot."

Mr Starkie has been mauled from all quarters. His first "fan mail" dropped on his doorstep yesterday. "It was from a woman who said I should be shot," he said cheerily. But he always has his mum. "She's a mother. She's proud of me."



Enjoyable read: A copy of Allan Starkie's biography 'Fergie: Her Secret Life' at its launch yesterday

Photograph: Tony Buckingham

Prison Service owns up to blunders over coach escape

Ian Burrell

The Prison Service last night admitted that a series of embarrassing blunders had allowed six highly dangerous prisoners to escape from a prison escort this week.

Three of the men, who have all been convicted of robbery, had previously mounted successful escapes.

The prisoners were transferred on a private coach with

a private driver because no prison vehicles were available. The coach broke down two miles from Blundeston prison in Suffolk, from where 10 inmates were being transferred to jails in London. Six of the most violent men were allowed to continue their journey in a second coach accompanied by only five prison officers. Normally a dozen officers would guard six violent inmates.

During the wait for a replacement vehicle, one prisoner taught the others how to slip their handcuffs by dislocating their thumbs.

The officers, who did not know that some of the prisoners had previously been escapees, were overpowered and badly beaten.

The prisoners then seized their personal prison files which were being transferred with them on the coach. They ripped the papers up and threw them

out of the windows. They then changed into their own civilian clothing which the prison authorities had allowed on to the coach as part of the prisoners' personal possessions.

After taking control of the coach on the M25, they ordered the driver to go to the Archway area of north London where they made their escapes.

Among those at large are Lee Mitty, serving 11 years for robbery, who absconded from Lit-

tlehey prison, Cambridgeshire, in March 1993 and remained at large for 18 months.

Warren Edwards, serving eight years for robbery, has made three previous successful prison escapes in 1991, 1992 and 1995.

Gary Staggs, who was sentenced to 10 years for robbery in 1993, had previously escaped from court cells.

Also on the run are Christopher Ward, serving 12 years, David Curry, nine years, and Stewart Warwick, nine years.

The six had formed a gang at the prison who were involved in a fight with a rival group of prisoners that resulted in one inmate receiving severe injuries including knife wounds to his face.

The Prison Service said: "There were tensions inside Blundeston that led to these prisoners being moved."

Harty Fletcher, assistant general secretary of the National Association of Probation Officers, said: "Public safety has clearly been compromised."

"This is another catastrophic blunder which should never have happened."

"There needs to be an inquiry into why a commercial bus was used to transfer six armed robbers, three of whom had previously escaped."

Bev Lord, vice-chairman of the Prison Officers' Association, said: "These prisoners had already demonstrated their propensity to violence and the lives of the prison officers were unreasonably put at risk."

Irish minister urged to quit over release of IRA remand suspects

Alan Murdoch
Dublin

Ireland's justice minister Nora Owen was last night resisting Opposition calls for her resignation after a number of alleged Republican paramilitary remand prisoners had to be released and re-arrested after Government officials bungled a judge's retirement date.

Fifteen prisoners, including 13 from Portlaoise Prison where many IRA inmates are held, had to be freed early on Wednesday morning, after legal advice indicated that detention orders made by the non-jury Special Criminal Court were flawed. They included Brian O'Donnell, a well-known IRA prisoner. The fiasco arose when it emerged that one of the court's

three judges, Mr Justice Dominic Lynch, was sitting while officially no longer a judge of that court.

His July request to step down had been approved by the Government in August, but the judge himself, normally based in the Circuit Court, was not informed of the decision. It was after this that he made the orders which were subsequently ruled *ultra vires*.

Government embarrassment was worsened by the fact that the judge's "de-listing" was confirmed in print in an official publication.

Those brought back to the Special Criminal Court yesterday to receive remand decisions renewing their custody were five Londonderry men facing arms charges following last week's

discovery of a primed IRA mortar near Malin Head in Donegal.

Others involved are IRA suspects detained after the discovery of a County Louth bomb factory in June. Lawyers for the prisoners were last night seeking to challenge their continued detention.

A sixteenth man was yesterday released and re-arrested for the same reasons. Five others on bail may have their cases reassessed.

In the Dail Mrs Owen was unable to say exactly why her department failed to inform Judge Lynch that his request to step down had been approved. She said a letter from the Attorney General warning her of the problem had not been brought to her attention.

She promised a "full, speedy and impartial inquiry" by outside officials but denied it was a resignation matter.

The main Opposition Fianna Fail party's justice spokesman John O'Donoghue said: "This would be a joke in a banana republic, and it's a joke in this republic. Someone is going to have to pay for it."

He urged her to "do the honourable thing and resign."

Fianna Fail leader Bertie Ahern asked how the minister could have remained in the dark as it appeared the judge's predicament had been known to the Attorney General in September. The minister had said she was not alerted and the letter to Judge Lynch not finalised until Wednesday this week.

Spring tells Major to resist Unionist election threat

Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

The Irish Foreign Minister Dick Spring yesterday said John Major would be "big enough" to pursue the peace process – and resist any Unionist threat to bring the Government down by provoking an early general election.

Mr Spring, who last night met Tony Blair, the Labour leader, for private talks, also urged Mr Major to reject the pressure by David Trimble, the Ulster Unionist leader, to proceed with the peace talks without Sinn Fein.

"The choice for Mr Major is to solve the Northern Ireland crisis. As opposed to depending on Mr Trimble's support, I think that Mr Major is big enough to go for the solution to Northern Ireland's problems. I believe that," said Mr Spring.

His remarks touched on raw Tory nerves and are certain to anger some Tory MPs by appearing to engage in domestic party politics on his flying visit to London.

There is a growing fear among senior Tory politicians who are close to the Unionists that, rather than wait until next

May, Mr Trimble will withdraw his support for the Government and trigger a general election in February to undermine his party's importance.

The Unionists could become pivotal in the New Year, if the Tories lose their majority after the Writal South by-election, following the death of Tory MP Barry Forster.

Speculation about bringing down the Government is rejected by Mr Trimble, but at a press conference at the Irish Embassy in London, Mr Spring was less dismissive.

There was no suggestion, he said, that the changes in the

Clinton administration after the re-election of the President would lead to the recall of Senator George Mitchell, who has acted as chairman for the talks.

Mr Spring made it clear he wants progress in the talks, but Sinn Fein must be part of any final settlement. He said: "Sinn Fein don't have a veto. They are not going to stop the talks. I have no difficulty in seeking a momentum in the talks which has not been there."

"Notwithstanding that, we have an obligation to those who support constitutional parties to see if we can bring about

an agreement between Nationalism and Unionism... The ideal is to stop the violence."

Mr Spring, who is in the centre of European moves to broker peace talks in the Middle East, said he had no indications – in spite of speculation of a secret IRA convention at the weekend – that there would be a ceasefire called before the general election.

"If we are going to have the ultimate accommodation it is going to require all parties sitting around the table," he said. "It would be in everybody's interests to have the talks as

quickly as possible and to have all parties at those talks," Mr Spring added.

"We want an unequivocal restoration of the ceasefire. We have said we want early entry of Sinn Fein to the talks. That is not to underestimate the difficulties caused by the Lishburn bomb, and the other bombs at Manchester and Canary Wharf."

"We have to overcome those difficulties. We will be looking closely at the nature of the ceasefire to know it is unequivocal and there can be no threat of going back to violence."

IS
Call me Mr Nail
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His reputation goes before him. Alison Graham thinks it's unjust. Find out why in this week's Radio Times.

RadioTimes

IT'S NOT WHAT YOU EXPECT.

سكس الاصل

Irresistible charm of five girls and the biggest turn-on of all

Steve Boggan

Last night, five women performed a task reserved each year for statesmen, Oscar winners and the regulars of celebrity gossip columns, yet only a few months they were unknown.

The Spice Girls switched on the Christmas lights in London's Oxford Street, the latest piece of exposure in a collective existence spanning less than six months to the public consciousness. If you admit you don't know who they are, your tabloid-reading friends will ask what planet you have been on, but don't be too hard on yourself. In the context of this particular rise, to say "meteoric" would be an understatement.

The exact provenance of the Spice Girls remains unclear. What is indisputable is that their first record, "Wannabe", is at number one in the charts of 27 countries, that it sold 1.25 million copies in the United Kingdom alone and that it stayed at number one here for seven weeks. Their second single, "Say You'll Be There", went straight in at number one and sold 750,000 copies in two weeks and their debut album, *Spice*, is at number one in Japan and will, without any doubt, go straight to number one when it is released here next week.

What has the music industry in such a sweat over the five women - ranging in ages from 18 to 24 - is that they have succeeded at all. All-girl British groups, apart from the one memorable exception, Bananarama, have always struggled. Five all-singing, all-dancing women were not supposed to be a success - the music press said so when "Wannabe" was released - so what went right?

The secret appears to stem from the fact that these are no puppet airheads. These are feisty women whose sex appeal strikes a chord with teenage boys and men, and whose attitude earns the admiration of young girls and adoring female adolescents.

They claim not to have been put together like their male counterparts in *Take That* or



Pop sensation: Music industry insiders say the Spice Girls' success is firmly based on a broad appeal - and hard work

The Monkees, yet the line-up is suspiciously eclectic.

There is Geri Halliwell, a 24-year-old former Katharine Hammett model from Watford (the smart one); Melanie Brown, 21 from Leeds, a kick-boxer with a pierced tongue (the tough one); Melanie Chisholm, 20, from Liverpool, who loves football (the tomboy); Victoria Adams, 21, who still lives with

her parents and wears stylish clothes (the sophisticated one); and Emma Lee Bunton, 18, from north London, who turns her back on the harder side of the band (the fluffy one).

If you believe their record company, Virgin, the women, who all wanted to be actresses, kept bumping into each other on the television and film audition circuit. They liked each

other, decided to share a house together in Maidenhead, Berkshire, to save money, and began writing songs.

If you believe the more sceptical members of the music business, they were brought together as the result of an ad placed in *The Stage* by a mystery pop Svengali who was pushed aside when the five decided they no longer needed him. Either

version ultimately lends itself to the view that they, and not executives, are calling the shots.

"No one really knows for sure how they came together, but they were pushing themselves for a long time," said Selina Webb, managing editor of *Music Week*. "They would keep appearing at industry parties and people kept saying: 'Who are those girls?'"

"They seem to be controlling their own destinies and don't appear to have been manufactured. Their personalities are simply too strong. Perhaps there was someone in the beginning who brought them together, but they are definitely calling the shots now."

Muff Fitzgerald, their spokesman at Virgin, said the band independently ap-

proached Simon Fuller, who manages Annie Lennox.

"They went to Simon because they respected Annie and he was simply bowled over by their music," he said. "The whole thing about being put together by someone is just a myth perpetuated by the music press."

"They are pulling the strings here, and that makes some people uncomfortable."

Holiday firms face monopolies probe

Tom Stevenson
City Editor

A monopolies inquiry was launched yesterday into the £7bn a year holiday industry to answer allegations that large integrated groups such as Thomson and Airtours were not in the consumers' interest.

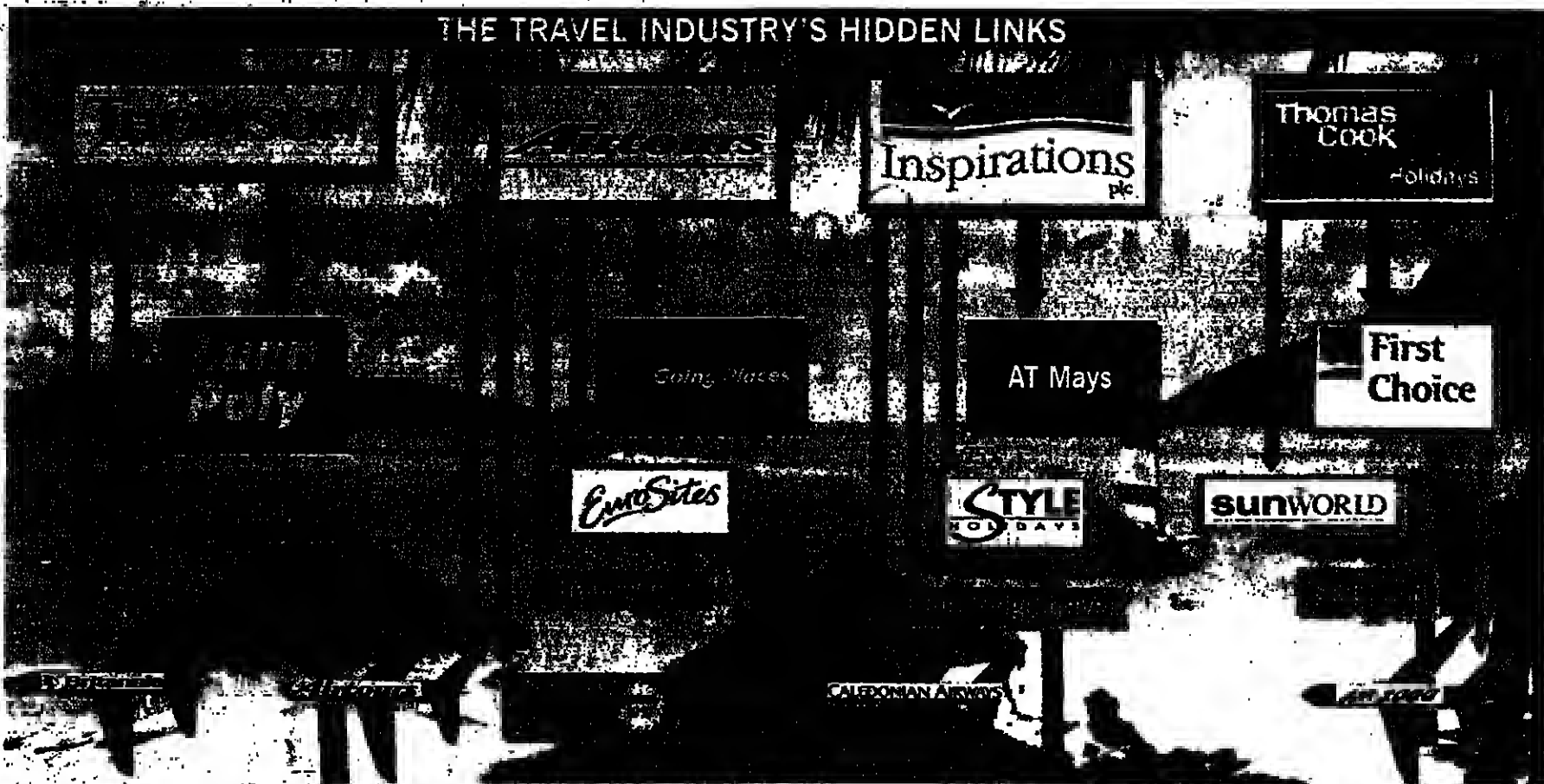
John Bridgeman, director-general of the Office of Fair Trading, said he was concerned that consumers were unaware that the largest travel agents were owned by four operators. He believed this "vertical integration" allowed the four companies unfairly to push their own holidays to unwitting customers.

The wide-ranging monopolies probe will also investigate the OFT's concerns that four operators are only offering discounts to holidaymakers who take out specific travel insurance deals from which they profit and which may be too expensive or unsuitable for the consumer.

The Monopolies & Mergers Commission, which will conduct the probe on behalf of the OFT, will also look into the way travel agents commonly use a dispute over commission terms as a pretext for taking their competitors' brochures off their racks during prime selling periods.

Mr Bridgeman said: "The two leading travel companies with whom I have had discussions have argued that such practices are a reflection of the competition that prevails in the travel trade. My view is that they can distort the competition process."

He added that he had failed in a bid to get the travel trade's two biggest companies, Thomson and Airtours, to agree to undertakings to



make the industry more transparent. "I need to have acceptable undertakings from all parties involved. It has become clear after many weeks of discussions with Thomson and Airtours that this is not going to be possible."

Airtours said yesterday it had been prepared to give undertakings that it would make its ownership of travel agent Going Places clear; that it would not take rivals' brochures off its shelves; and that it

would not abuse its market power to impose unfair terms on small independent travel agents or tour operators.

The OFT's bid to avoid a monopolies reference failed, however, be-

cause Thomson, the market leader and owner of the Lunn Poly chain of travel agents, refused to give any ground - claiming the undertakings represented an unacceptable infringement of its commercial freedom.

Both Airtours and Thomson put a brave face on the inquiry yesterday. Thomson, which sells 30 per cent of the UK's 8.5 million package holidays a year and runs 800 Lunn Poly agents, said there were now more

high-street travel agents than there were five years ago, and said the market share of the top five operators had declined over the past seven years.

Airtours finance director Harry Coe added: "We welcome the investigation. We are confident that any detailed investigation will be unable to find evidence of anything other than a highly competitive industry that has given good value to consumers." Airtours is number two to Thomson in package holidays and has 700 Going Places outlets.

Mr Coe said the price of holidays had fallen by between 15 and 20 per cent in inflation-adjusted terms over the past 10 years and as a result the size of the holiday market had grown enormously. "It is just not an anti-competitive industry."

Despite the companies' confidence in the outcome of the inquiry, which could take 12 months, shares in the publicly-quoted holiday groups fell sharply yesterday in the City. Airtours' shares tumbled from 71.3p to 64.4p while Inspirations ended 10p lower at 82.5p.

Independent travel agents and Labour, however, were delighted by the decision.

Nigel Griffiths, shadow consumer minister, said: "This is long overdue and vindicates all our complaints. It could finally mean the end of the stranglehold imposed by the giants of the industry. We need to stop compulsory add-ons like insurance agreements that customers have to take out when they book a holiday. If the big firms have been so reluctant to concede on this issue it indicates that they are making a killing out of them."

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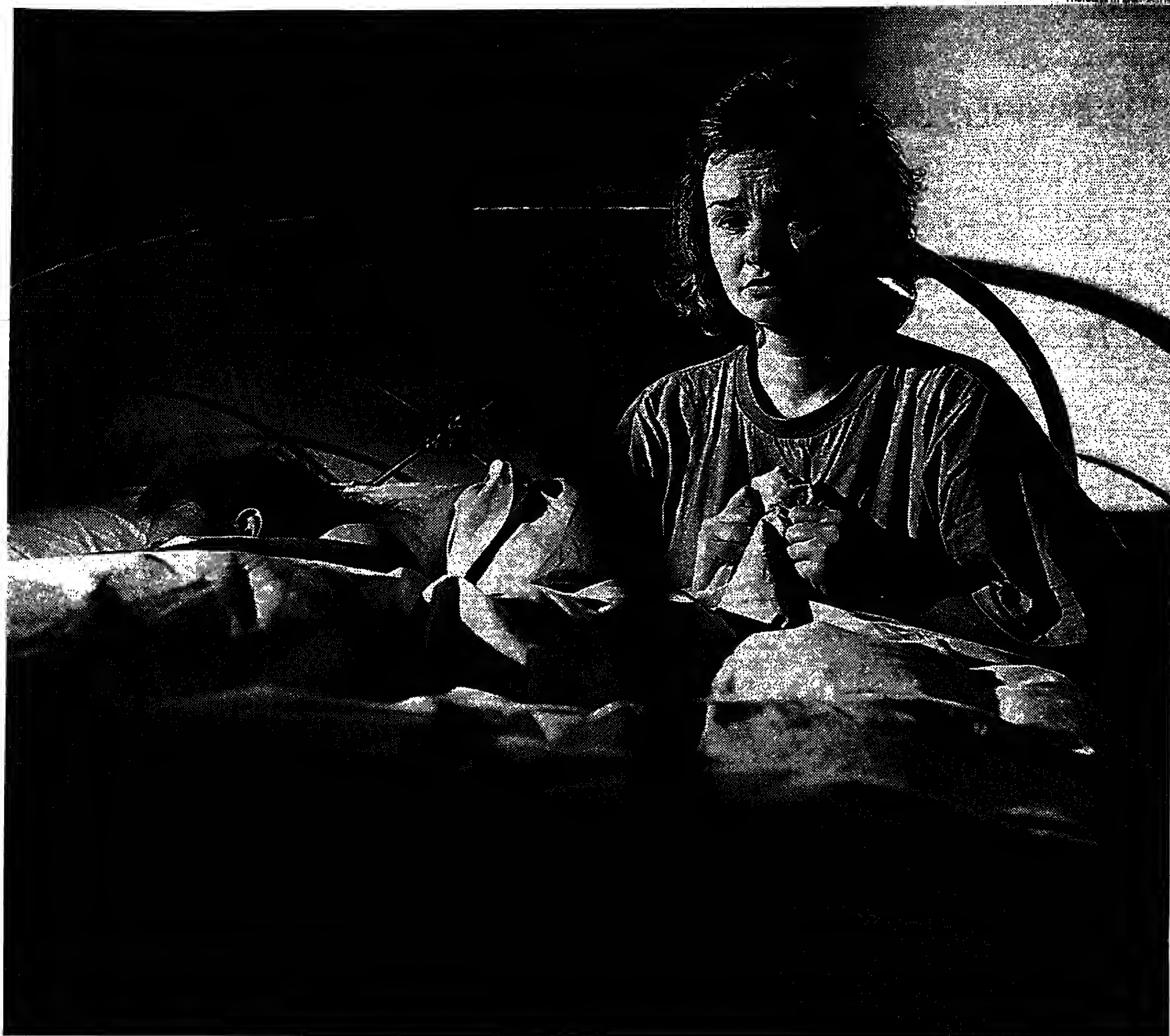
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Compiled by Ben Summers



Sir James's lawyers confirmed to *The Independent* that the Goldsmith Foundation for European Affairs is a "private charitable foundation established overseas", adding that, "as such, it does not have any UK charitable status". A British charity would be unable to fund political activity.

law from 23 November and that employees could take court proceedings if management refuses to implement the provisions of the directive.

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صحبنا من الراحل

US hired guns join British election shoot-out

Britain's election is becoming more Presidential than ever, writes John Rentoul

The election campaign teams of both main parties have long had close links with their US counterparts and with Washington political consultants, the "hired guns" of American politics.

The Conservative and Labour backroom teams are already running a "long campaign" for the next general election which is more like an American presidential race than ever before.

Labour's campaign headquarters, run by Tony Blair's closest aide Peter Mandelson in Millbank Tower just up the Thames from the Palace of Westminster, is explicitly modelled on the Clinton campaign "war room" of his first presidential victory four years ago.

George Stephanopoulos, the Clinton advisor who is expected to spend time with the Blair camp, was not only the "Body Man" for that campaign, whose job was to be at the side of the President (The Body) at all times. But he remained Clinton's closest adviser throughout his first term, and could offer Labour valuable lessons on how to manage the transition from campaigning to government.

Labour's connections with Clinton's team are now richer than ever. Mr Mandelson visited the Republican convention in San Diego, and watched the



American conventions: from top, George Stephanopoulos, Philip Gould and Danny Finkelstein are drawn to a tradition that prefers party conferences American-style

second debate between Mr Clinton and Bob Dole with Mr Stephanopoulos. Jonathan Powell, Mr Blair's chief of staff, was a diplomat at the British Embassy in Washington and visits regularly. Philip Gould, Mr Blair's polling adviser, has been working with the second Clinton



campaign as he did with the first. John Prescott, Labour deputy leader, visited the Democratic convention in Chicago with his aides.

The last time Mr Clinton won, Mr Blair visited Clinton's team himself, along with Gordon Brown, the shadow chancellor. It was there that Mr Brown invented "tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime", the slogan which helped carry his ally to the Labour leadership. The lessons Labour has learnt have not just been about techniques, although instant rebuttal of Tory

propaganda is now an obsession in the Millbank war room, with the help of the computer database of political quotes and documents known as Excalibur.

"I know how to work the last 90 days of a campaign," the 35-year-old Mr Stephanopoulos said when asked what kind of help he was offering Labour. "Day-to-day tactics, how to respond to the tried and true techniques of the right wing."

But the lessons are political too, as some of the opponents of Labour's "modernisers" fear. Mr Clinton won on Tuesday with some striking coalitionist rhetoric about the need for the parties to work together.

There are also pointers to further internal reforms of the Labour Party, with some of Mr Blair's supporters openly advocating turning the party conference into a "showcase" for the party rather than a policy-making body.

Labour should learn from the "poll lift which successful conventions gave the Republicans and then the Democrats this summer in America," says a blueprint drawn up by the "moderniser" faction, the Labour Co-ordinating Committee.

The Conservatives are learning from America too. Although their flirtation with the psychological system of Dick Wirthlin, Ronald Reagan's public relations guru, was an expensive failure, costing over £1m in the dying days of Margaret Thatcher's premiership, they have maintained contacts with Republican advisers.

After the Republican landslide in the 1994 mid-term elections, Newt Gingrich's pollster and adviser Frank Luntz visited London and met Cabinet ministers Stephen Dorrell and Michael Portillo.

The visit was arranged by Danny Finkelstein at the Social Market Foundation, and something of an American politics addict who is now head of research at Tory Central Office.

Mr Finkelstein has long drawn political lessons from America. And, although the "New Labour, New Danger" was published by his favoured Republican contacts, the lesson he draws from the American election is that incumbency and the economy are the Tories' key advantages.

Tory spin doctors to 'mind' Major in run-up to election

Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

Conservative party "spin doctors" are to play an increasing role behind the Prime Minister in the run-up to the election in an attempt to avoid damage like the row over caning.

The outline plan for drafting Tory party press officers into more of John Major's programme was agreed before the debacle over caning. But insiders believe it highlighted the difficulties they are facing.

The drive to regain the initiative from Labour could raise questions of a conflict between the interests of the party and government.

The Prime Minister's press office at Downing Street is staffed exclusively with civil servants. All party business is handled by the Tory Central Office press office, under Charles Lewington.

Party sources were highly irritated last week by the way the caning issue was handled by Downing Street. It was the

Prime Minister's office which last week confirmed that Mr Major had discussed the Government's stand on caning with Gillian Shephard, the Secretary of State for Education.

That led to speculation in the press that Mrs Shephard had been given "six of the best" by Mr Major. That was denied by No 10, although Mrs Shephard openly declared in the Commons that she disagreed with the Prime Minister.

Central Office press officers were left with the task of "damage limitation" after the Prime Minister's office confirmed that Mr Major had made a telephone call to Mrs Shephard.

Tory press officers are now going to take an increasing role in handling Mr Major's tours. Last week, when he visited Nottingham, he was accompanied by Downing Street press officers.

Senior Tory sources confirmed that the Central Office press officers will be seeking to act as Mr Major's minder on such visits in the months leading

to the election. They point out that Labour cannot complain, because they plan to appoint Alastair Campbell, Tony Blair's chief press officer, to the Downing Street post, if Labour wins the election.

The Downing Street press operation will remain in civil service hands, until the election.

The Prime Minister, meanwhile, is planning a more aggressive campaign than the 1992 election tour, when he led a Tory fightback from a soapbox. "He is going to go into the Labour heartlands," said the source.

The campaign itinerary has yet to be worked out, but Mr Major is planning to visit staunch Labour areas, such as Liverpool. He told last month's Conservative Party conference that he would be out on the street, across Britain in the coming election.

Mr Major's aides said he would still concentrate on the key marginals, but his tour will take in areas not covered in the 1992 campaign.



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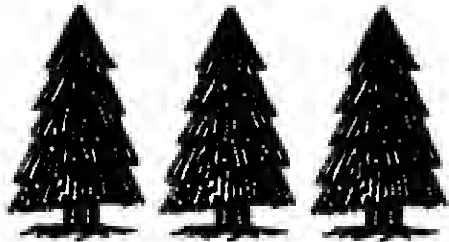
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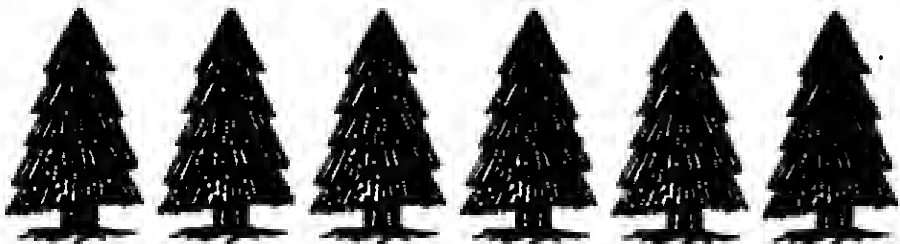
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هكذا من الأصل

news

High Court Judge backs Home Secretary's 'harsh' decision and says adopted orphan must leave the country after all



Not welcome: Jaya Ram Khadka and his adopted father Richard Morley leaving the High Court in London yesterday

Photograph: John Voos

Nepalese man told he must leave Britain

Charlie Bain and
Jessica Gawlick

A Nepalese man rescued from poverty and brought up by a British millionaire in a Gloucestershire castle yesterday lost his fight to stay in Britain.

The High Court yesterday upheld the Home Secretary Michael Howard's refusal to grant Jaya Ram Khadka "exceptional leave" to remain in Britain on compassionate grounds.

Mr Khadka and his adopted father Richard Morley are now considering setting up home in Nepal.

Mr Justice Laws said in his

ruling that many may regard the Home Secretary's decision to ignore an Immigration Appeal Tribunal recommendation to let Mr Khadka stay as "harsh", but after examining the case it was "perfectly understandable".

Mr Khadka, 20, was brought to Britain by businessman Richard Morley in 1990, honouring a pact he made with the boy's father, Basu Khadka - a policeman in a remote area of Nepal who saved Morley's life when the millionaire collapsed with a punctured lung while on a mountaineering expedition in 1984.

He refused any financial reward, but instead obtained a pledge from Mr Morley to take care of his son if he ever became orphaned.

When the policeman died six years later, Mr Morley brought his 14-year-old son over to Britain and made him heir to his estate at Clearwell Castle in Gloucestershire.

Mr Justice Laws said that he hoped future explanations by Mr Howard of reasons to deport "may be clearer", but he said that he was "unable to conclude" that the Secretary of State's decision in this case was beyond the range of responses open to a reasonable decision-maker.

"Many may regard the result he arrived at as harsh," he added.

Mr Morley has made several attempts to extend his son's stay in Britain since 1990. He took his case to the Immigration Appeals Tribunal which made a recommendation that he be allowed to stay on compassionate grounds, but in March this year the Home Secretary signed a deportation order.

Outside the court yesterday, Mr Morley said he would not be separated from his adopted son.

"Wherever Jay goes I will go and the rest of my family will follow. My family will no doubt be split for a period, but we'll have to endure that. Eventually we will be reunited in a different country."

"There is no point in appealing if the law is that the Home Secretary can do what he wants, then that is the law and I cannot change the law."

Mr Khadka said that he felt heartbroken: "I think it is terrible not just for me but for my family."

"The fact my family has stood by me like this for the past six years and will be standing by me for the rest of my life, surely that will speak volumes of compassion."

Lilley illegally blocked benefit

A High Court judge yesterday ruled that Peter Lilley, Secretary of State for Social Security, wrongly suspended welfare payments from hundreds of thousands of claimants.

Mr Justice Laws said that a regulation used by the Government to block payments pending legal challenges over benefits awards was legally flawed and that Mr Lilley had been engaged in "an illegitimate exercise".

The ruling was a victory for the Child Poverty Action Group, on behalf of Paul Sutherland, 18, of Swansea, who is partially blind and a student at Aberystwyth University.

A CPAG legal officer, David Thomas, said: "Since the regulation was introduced in 1992, the Secretary of State has suspended benefit in similar circumstances in tens of thousands of cases. It always seemed to us quite wrong that claimants should be denied ongoing benefit - to which they have a legal entitlement - just because a court in another case might in the future interpret the law differently."

Mr Lilley was refused leave to appeal and will now consider re-opening his application direct to the Court of Appeal.

In January last year, Paul's mother won a ruling from an adjudication officer that Paul was entitled to disability living allowance for his care needs at "the middle rate".

The right to that payment had been established in an earlier case known as Halliday. But payments to Paul were withheld while Mr Lilley appealed against the Halliday ruling.

That appeal was lost in the Court of Appeal in June last year, but Paul's full benefit entitlement remained suspended while Mr Lilley took his case to the House of Lords.

That renewed appeal is due to be heard in early December but Paul is still owed some £2,000 in suspended payments.

Mr Justice Laws said that the regulation Mr Lilley had relied on (incorporated in the 1987 Social Security Regulations) was outside the law.

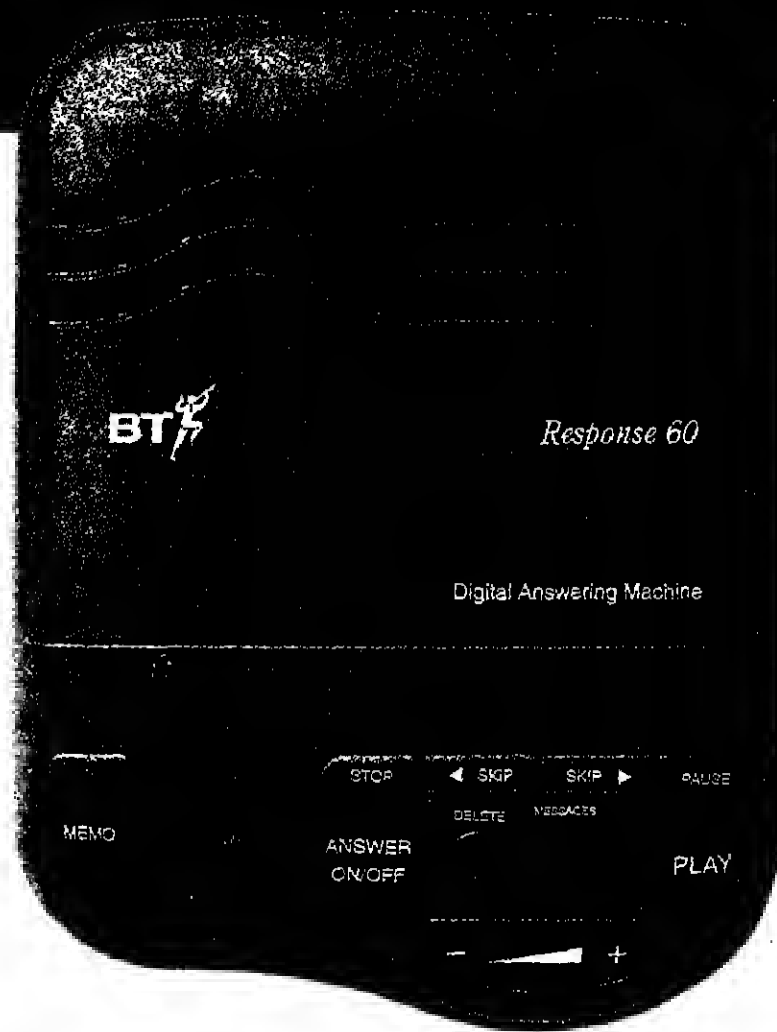
He held that the legislation under which the regulation was made did not allow payments to be blocked while the courts were deciding whether "an award ought to be revised now or in the future".

The judge warned Government ministers: "Where the executive has been allowed by the legislature to make law, it must abide strictly by the terms of its delegated authority."

Later Mr Justice Thomas said: "The Secretary of State has used the power he claimed to have in over 50,000 cases... The effect of this judgment is that he didn't have power to do that."

Jill Alleo-King of the National Federation of the Blind said: "It's a big breakthrough."

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Too much sex, drugs, murder and mayhem. Frankly Mr Bond, you're a physical wreck

Liz Hunt
Health Editor

James Bond, the world's most famous secret agent, has been dealt a blow he is unlikely to ever recover from, with claims that his hard-living, hard-loving lifestyle left him licensed to kill no one but himself.

Agent 007, the epitome of suave, sophisticated manhood, who was lusted after by millions of women and became a role model for millions men, has been revealed as a mentally deranged, physical wreck, who is

probably impotent, and who never recovered from his trauma-ridden childhood. An analysis of Bond's literary and early celluloid existence by a team of medical experts has laid bare a life that has left the man so badly shaken and stirred that "M" should be informed immediately.

Professor Bruce Pitt, of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, says that the death of Bond's parents in a climbing accident when he was just 11 left scars that could never be erased. Bond's search for love led him



Shaken and stirred: Films depicted a glamorous life for Bond, but medical analysis shows he would now be disturbed and probably impotent

to lose his virginity in a Paris brothel aged 16 but the seeds of the sadistic and anti-social murderous aggression were already in place. He murdered his first lover, the hothot madam Martha Dehrandt, a year later. Mike Berry, a forensic clinical psychologist, describes Bond at this stage as an "emotionally crippled Type-A psychopath who is suffering from post-traumatic and long-term stress". He says later repeated blows to his head and a reported bout of amnesia, suggest that he has permanent brain damage.

Dr Berry also questioned why it was that 007 avoided close relationships, perhaps because he was afraid of getting too close to a woman and then losing her like he lost his parents. "This is a very unstable subject who is in desperate need of help. The way he bottles up his feelings and shows no emotions leaves him like a volcano waiting to erupt," Dr Berry says in the December issue of *Men's Health* magazine, which commissioned the Bond analysis.

Bond's use of amphetamines before an assignment - powdered

Benzedrine in a glass of Dom Perignon 1953 champagne was his preferred formulation - would have done nothing to alleviate his underlying precarious mental state, Dr Berry and Professor Pitt conclude. Bond's addiction to nicotine - he worked through 70 a day of a high tar, unfiltered brand - would have exacerbated his dangerous mood swings, according to Martin Jarvis, principle scientist at the Imperial Cancer Research Fund. His high-cholesterol diet and lack of exercise would have added to

his risk of heart attack. But, perhaps most frightening of all is the detail of Bond's drinking habits. On a typical day he consumed one "vodka" - a double Smirnoff vodka and a double Martini - a half-bottle of champagne, and a cocktail comprising vermouth, gin, and vodka. On a mission, he would add whisky, wines and a mixture of bourbons to the brew.

Andrew McNeil at the Institute of Alcohol Studies said this was "incompatible with being in the secret service and indeed incompatible with being alive".

It could lead to shrinkage of his sexual organs, and impotency. However, 007's sexual exploits appear to contradict this view. In addition to his visits to brothels, 007 sleeps with around 68 women a year. He never uses a condom, eschews non-penetrative sex, and is exposed to all manner of sexually transmitted diseases, according to Dr Caroline Bradbeer, a consultant genito-urinary physician. "I would expect that long-term damage to his testicles will mean he is now probably sterile and firing blanks," she said.

007's life in the fast lane

Goldfinger
James Bond, with two double bourbons inside him, sat in the final departure lounge of Miami Airport and thought about life and death. It was part of his profession to kill people.

"Room service?" I'd like to order breakfast. Half a pint of orange juice, three eggs, lightly scrambled, with bacon, a double portion of café Expresso with cream, toast, Marmalade. Got it?

Thunderball:
"He had a hangover, a bad one, with an aching head and stiff joints. When he coughed - smoking too much goes with drinking too much - and doubles the hangover - clouds of small luminous black spots swam across his vision like amoebae in pond water."

The Spy Who Loved Me:
"While I bussed myself with the percolator, he opened his case and took out a small bottle of white pills. He took out two and when I gave him the coffee he swallowed them down. 'Benzedrine. That'll keep me awake for tonight. I'll fit in some sleep tomorrow.'"

"Suddenly there were two more hands washing me and a naked body was up against mine and I smelled the sweat and the gunpowder and I turned and laughed up into his grumpy face and then I was in his arms and our mouths met in a kiss that seemed as it would never end while the water poured down and made us shut our eyes."

Priests to face new system of church justice

Wide-ranging reforms proposed in attempt to streamline outdated disciplinary procedures

Andrew Brown
Religious Affairs Correspondent

The Church of England is to replace its cumbersome and expensive system of church courts, whose ancestry goes back before the Norman conquest, with modern tribunals which will meet in secret. It will also introduce a new disciplinary offence of "gross inefficiency".

The new courts will enable bishops to deal effectively with heresy and sexual misconduct: the present system, last reformed in 1963, is so cumbersome and expensive that only three cases have ever been brought under it.

The reforms proposed yesterday arose from the case of the Rev Thomas Tyler, who was four times tried and convicted of adultery with one of his parishioners (twice on appeal) and whose protestations of innocence cost the church around £250,000.

A committee chaired by Canon Alan Hawker was set up in 1992 to consider streamlining the system. While it deliberated, the trial took place of the Dean of Lincoln, the Very Rev Brandon Jackson, which cost the church a further £100,000.

and untold embarrassment before he was acquitted of an affair with Verity Freestone, a former verger at the cathedral. The most controversial of the commission's recommendations, published yesterday, is that future trials of his sort should be held in private, unless the defendant wishes otherwise, though the verdict will always be publicly delivered.

The new courts will enable bishops to deal effectively with heresy and sexual misconduct: the present system, last reformed in 1963, is so cumbersome and expensive that only three cases have ever been brought under it.

The report suggests that clergy with frehold are held for life, nothing could have been done, said one of the commission members.

One of the main instruments in this is a semi-official blacklist

kept at Lambeth Palace, of clergy who should not be employed for one reason or another. The commission proposes that clergy whose names are on this list should in future be told of their status and of the reasons for it.

As well as the changes to the court system that Canon Hawker's commission has proposed, it also suggests changes to the laws governing clergy conduct. New offences are to be introduced to cover doctrinal and liturgical errors, and there is to be a new scale of punishments, ranging from warnings to defrocking. However, the warnings under the new system will be much more effective than under the old one, since a breach will be prosecuted as contempt of court.

Canon Hawker denied when the report was launched that it would put excessive power into the hands of bishops. He said the new arrangements transferred much of the responsibility for the prosecution of cases from the bishops to independent inquirers (who would be retired police officers or similarly qualified laymen) and that they guaranteed greater fairness for clergy accused of misconduct.

Passengers sue over hurricane

Passengers on a luxury ship have issued a writ over the "extreme discomfort" they suffered on a hurricane-hit cruise to the Caribbean, writes Michael Streetier.

Thirty-eight members of last autumn's trip on P&O's £200m flagship *Oriana* claim they suffered a "ruined holiday" because of the weather and excessive vibration on board.

Passengers - who were offered 30 per cent discount on a future cruise - also complained that the food and entertainment were below standard, and that they were not warned of the risk of such appalling weather.

A spokesman for their lawyers said: "One major grievance is that the cruise should not have gone to the Caribbean in the height of the hurricane season or at least the brochure should have warned of the likelihood of disruption... It is interesting to note that... the *Oriana* no longer offers a Caribbean cruise in September."

A P&O spokesman said: "We believe there is no claim and we will be fighting the action."

DAILY POEM

Splicing Rope

By Katrina Porteous

It's simple, honey. And so dear
Is born in 'crabs so th' d'v'n't fly;
Turn towards ye, an' push away.
And the rope ends knit in a seamless splice
As Charlie's home fingers weave them.
And the hut walls creak. In the sandy night
The seas rush in on the rocks, and cleave them.
It's come to a manner of teach, our sight,
In the years since Charlie's father taught him
With fingers brown as if barked with cutch:
"If navor liked tarrin' on over-much.
Them hard his stick in your hands, y'know,
An' 'ae' the tar gets in, y'know;
Och! Bloody murder, all th' horst!
Naeen painkillers then, y'know;
W'ot them rubber gloves on for?"
The hut is a safe boat, tight from the wind,
Warmed by the hot stove, Charlie's hand.
Safe on my shoulder, warm, wears me
Tight with the boy on his father's knee.
Bound by the same turns he spins me.
Born friends so th' d'v'n't fly;
Turn towards ye, an' push away.

Katrina Porteous's dialect poems of the Northumbrian fishermen are published next week by Bloodaxe in her debut collection *The Lost Music*. They were written for Charlie Douglas (1909-95) a fisherman, and son of fisherman, from the village of Beadnell in Northumberland. "I wanted to note that... the *Oriana* no longer offers a Caribbean cruise in September."

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THERE'S A GREAT DEAL GOING ON THIS CHRISTMAS

Anglo-French talks: Major and Chirac to dine at sea as suspected British beef causes closure of Hard Rock Cafe in Paris

Café crisis gives summit a bad taste

Mary Dejevsky
Bordeaux
Christopher Bellamy
Defence Correspondent

When Jacques Chirac and John Major arranged a Franco-British summit for today, there must have been one subject above all which they wanted to keep off the agenda: beef. Conflicts over BSE are, after all, one of the few issues that cloud one of Britain's better bilateral relationships in Europe.

It was rather unfortunate, then, that on the eve of their meeting, beef slid back on the menu.

It was announced yesterday that the Hard Rock Cafe in Paris had been closed for 15 days by order of the Paris authorities on suspicion of having breached the European embargo on British beef. Some 300kg of suspect meat was found in a freezer at the cafe last week.

The Hard Rock Cafe described the move as "completely unjustified" and said that it would appeal. Its defence is that the beef originated in the Irish Republic, and was packaged in Britain, a procedure which – it says – is permitted under the EU embargo, so long as the company concerned is on an

approved list. Its spokesman added that only French beef was used in the cafe's hamburgers.

The French authorities had initially appeared to be considering the cafe's arguments, but changed their mind on Wednesday, when the cafe was ordered to be shut as constituting "a serious risk to public health".

They say that this is the second time the Hard Rock cafe has been found with suspect meat: a raid in June found 500kg of unlabelled beef – itself an offence. This resulted in a warning.

Regardless of the technicalities of the case, the closure of such a high-profile operation as the Hard Rock Cafe in Paris suggests an attempt by the authorities to show that they are enforcing the embargo on British beef.

That the cafe is a foreign, rather than French, operation makes the measure all the more popular. So far, it is mostly French butchers' shops that have been caught with suspect meat, and fined. To target such a prime symbol of Anglo-Saxon culture will have been deeply pleasing to some.

Doubtless Mr Major and Mr Chirac were trying to avoid the subject as they met for dinner last night, ahead of today's

more formal talks. After all, beef aside, relations between London and Paris are excellent. The two leaders have roughly similar ideas on Europe, and military co-operation between Europe's two premier armed powers is racing ahead.

To mark the event, a new naval agreement between Britain and France was signed on board HMS *Liverpool*, a Type-42 destroyer, in Bordeaux harbour yesterday. The choice of vessel was coincidental, but probably apt: Project Horizon, an air-defence destroyer now under development, is designed primarily to defeat air and missile attack and is expected to form part of European defences against long-range missiles in the next century.

British Secretary of State for Defence Michael Portillo and his French counterpart, Charles Millon, signed the deal under which the chiefs of the British and French navies – Admiral Sir Jock Slater and Admiral Jean-Charles Lefebvre – will supervise joint planning of naval operations, joint exercises, procurement, research and development, and the use of joint British and French naval forces in pursuit of a stronger European defence component within Nato and the Western European Union.

But naval sources yesterday stressed the agreement did not cover nuclear matters although there is co-operation between the two countries in deciding nuclear strategy and shared nuclear patrols.

A Franco-British European Air Group, was inaugurated by John Major and President Chirac on 30 October 1995. Because naval operations are centred on ships, a fixed headquarters is not needed. The Royal Navy said yesterday it would mean building on common procedures and means of communication.



Locked out: Two employees at the Paris branch of the Hard Rock Cafe peering behind closed doors on Wednesday after the city authorities, suspecting that contraband British beef was on the menu, ordered its closure for 15 days

British exiles enjoy class of Bordeaux

Mary Dejevsky
Bordeaux

In the heart of Bordeaux, where five of its great avenues join, is the Maison du Vin and the International Council of Bordeaux Wine, the co-ordinating body for the region's biggest export. Believe this if you will, but the person who represents this most French of industries to the outside world, is not French.

Her origins are Scottish, she was educated in England and she started her career in the US. Fiona Morrison, a straight-talking (in two languages) master of wine, is, as she describes herself to associates, "the flag carrier of Bordeaux wine".

She is also a pillar of the British community in Bordeaux,

and held up as an example of the city's cosmopolitan character – would a foreigner even be considered for such a job in Paris? – and of the special affinity that exists between the British and Bordeaux.

His biggest complaint is the cost of employing other people

More than 500 years after the city fell to the French and the English retreated across the Channel, many happily established Britons feel that 300 years of English rule (1154 to 1453) left their mark. The English are judged to have ruled with a light hand, encouraged trade and helped the city to a mercantile pre-eminence that it never completely lost.

Now, there are around 9,000 Britons resident in the area and many more who own second homes. Along with the hoteliers, the estate agents and the builders, there is an adviser to French motorways, a couple with a paper factory, a fertiliser dealer and a sturgeon farmer

producing Aquitaine caviar. There are lawyers, musicians, translators and teachers, and a slew of financial and personnel consultants.

These include financial advisers like Rupert Holderness, who arrived 12 years ago for National Westminster Bank and stayed on when the bank pulled out. His wife is French, his son goes to a French state school. But it is the lifestyle that also keeps him in France. Would he return to the UK? He pauses, just long enough to imagine the London he left, and the commuting, and the career options.

"No, I don't think I could." Most of his business is with the British community, and extends well beyond the immediate Bordeaux region and that traditional British hunting ground, the Dordogne. Like many of the British business people, he has installed his office on one of the recent trading estates that ring Bordeaux. His biggest complaint is the cost of employing other people. There is a secretarial pool for the block; employing full-time assistance is too expensive because of the charges employers must pay. Asked whether he would employ more people if the charges were lower, he insists: "Yes, no doubt about it."

Only some of the British residents are servicing the British community. At least six in the Bordeaux area are taking on the locals at their own game, with a degree of success, if not great financial reward. About 30km

She speaks good French but curses French bureaucracy

outside Bordeaux to the south, in a small settlement called Cerons, live Robert and Sue Watts, winemakers.

She was an investment consultant and amateur winemaker, he was a barrister, and 10 years ago – after their respective parents had died – they decided that on a "now or never" change of lifestyle. They toyed with the idea of Spain, but decided that if they were going in for wine, it had to be France and Bordeaux.

With the good offices of a local French vineyard owner, they found the Chateau du Scail, a small, neat chateau with 2.5 hectares of vines that had been leased out to a neighbour. They

started from scratch, buying all the equipment new, and making – as they admit – mistakes. Although Sue Watts speaks good French, she curses French bureaucracy, saying the goal posts, especially on employment regulations, seem to change just when you think everything has been clarified.

The business has grown. This year, their white Chateau du Scail, estate bottled, won a special mention (one of 300 out of 20,000) in the prestigious Hachette Wine Guide – a real mark of acceptance in the very closed and established French wine world – and orders from the Cafe Flo organisation. But they reckon that there is still some way to go before their considerable investment starts to pay.

Back in Bordeaux just now there is an air of expectation in the British community. Marks & Spencer are opening their first store here in 10 days' time. The British are looking forward to buying what Fiona Morrison decorously called underwear; the Bordelais will be looking for conservatively styled cashmere and wool to match their bourgeois image. Strange though it might seem, they are also looking forward to the food: breakfast cereals and tea, sandwiches, muffins and cakes.



Entente still cordiale: Major and Chirac meet on British warship later today amid latest BSE allegations

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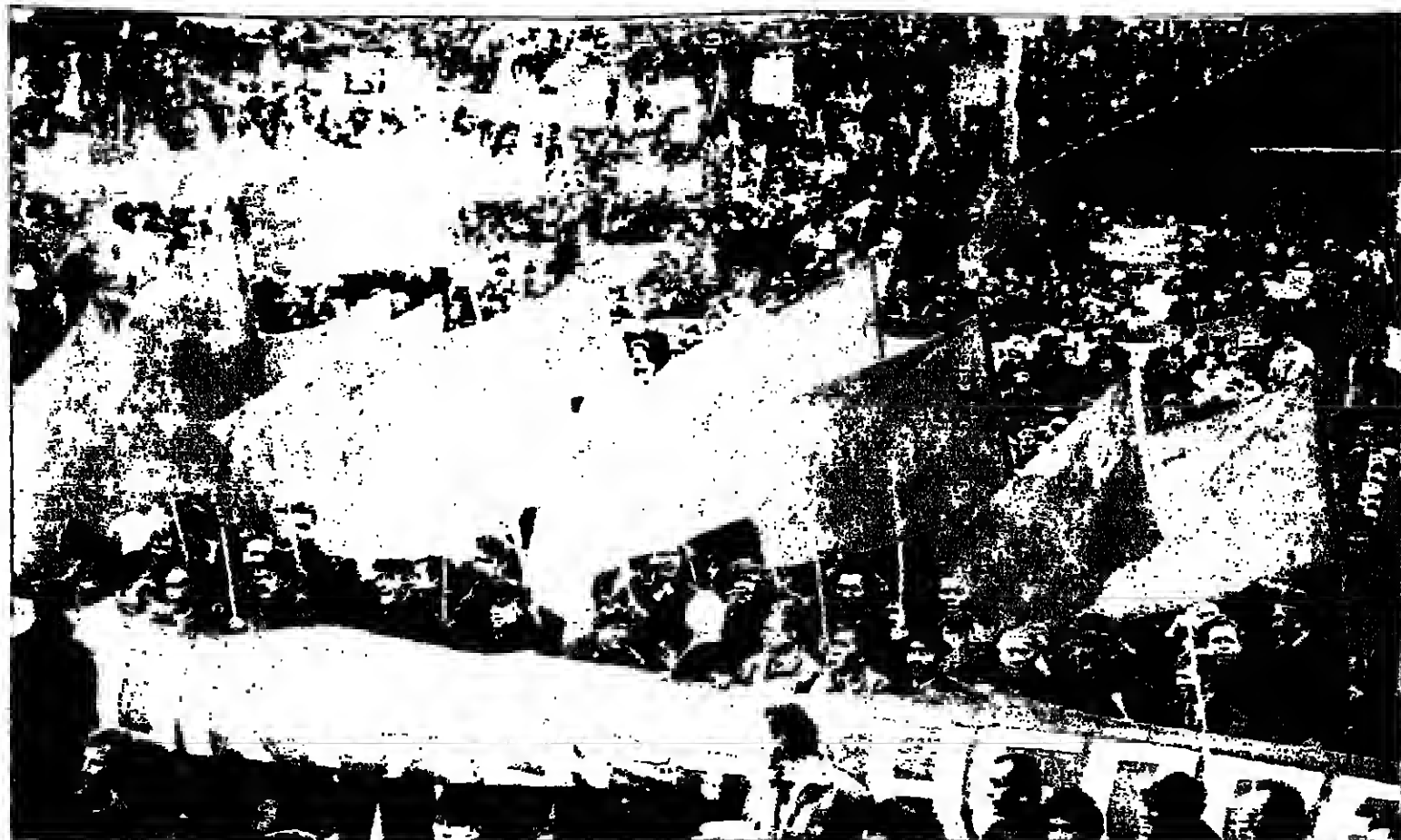
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Keep the Red Flag flying: Russian Communists demonstrating in Moscow yesterday, on the 79th anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution. President Yeltsin announced that, in future, 7 November will be known as the 'Day of Accord and Reconciliation'. Photograph: Ullrich/Reuters

Heart surgeon says Yeltsin is no alcoholic

Helen Womack
Moscow

Michael De Bakey, the Texas heart surgeon who monitored Boris Yeltsin's bypass operation this week, said yesterday he had also examined his liver and could refute the widely-held view that the Kremlin leader was a heavy drinker. "He is not an alcoholic," Dr De Bakey declared.

His remarks came in the latest update on the condition of the 65-year-old President, who yesterday took his first steps after undergoing a quintuple heart bypass on Tuesday. Surgeons said he was recovering well and would probably move from intensive care to an ordi-

nary hospital ward today. While displaying unprecedented "glasnost" about the health of a Kremlin leader, Doctors are coy on the subject of whether over-indulgence in vodka contributed to Mr Yeltsin's problems. But as a foreigner, Dr De Bakey, 88, evidently felt no need to censor himself.

Mr Yeltsin's liver and kidneys did not look like those of someone who abused alcohol, he said. As he resumed normal life, the President would be able to enjoy a drink. "Hopefully, he'll moderate any excesses he may have had. But I wouldn't expect an occasional experience of that kind to have an effect on his heart."

However, ordinary Russians may be sceptical about Dr De Bakey's comments. "There's a fine line between alcoholism and the broad Russian character," said one Muscovite, on hearing the news.

Even if he can drink sometimes, the President will have to cut down on salami, a Russian favourite, as he has been put on a low-fat diet for the rest of his life. Dr De Bakey warned against letting unhealthy eating habits creep back in. Patients, he said, "start off doing pretty well, and then they feel better and become more normal, and the next thing you know they are acting like ordinary people."

If Mr Yeltsin gives doctors cause for concern in the im-

mediate future, however, it is more likely to be over his insistence on resuming work as fast as possible rather than over his dietary disobedience. With political infighting threatening to break out again at the first sign of weakness from Mr Yeltsin and restiveness among millions of workers who have not received their wages for months, the President is under enormous pressure to show that he is once more in charge.

Yesterday he sent a message to Russians from his hospital bed, saying he was back at work. To prove it, he marked the 79th anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution by decreeing that 7 November will remain a public holiday, but henceforth be known as the Day of Accord and Reconciliation. "People are still divided into Reds and Whites, us and them," he said. "It is time to turn the page. Russia is indivisible and we must be together."

His appeal cut little ice with Communist opponents who, prevented from marching across Red Square as in Soviet times, gathered instead near the Bolshoi Theatre to air their economic grievances. Their leader, Gennady Zyuganov, said the 22-hour transfer of power to Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin on the day of the President's operation had made Russians "a laughing stock in the eyes of the world".

Tasmanian admits gun massacre

Robert Milliken
Port Arthur

Relief swept across the island of Tasmania yesterday when Martin Bryant, the man who massacred 35 people at Port Arthur six months ago, pleaded guilty in court to all charges against him over the world's biggest mass shooting by a lone gunman.

Staff at Port Arthur, the 19th-century prison for transported British convicts, which is now one of Australia's chief tourist attractions, could barely contain their emotions when the news came through.

They opened bottles of champagne, donned party hats and closed their doors early to hold a celebratory barbecue on the lawn by the seaford where they had watched in horror on Sunday, 28 April, as Bryant stalked through the crowded site, armed with two semi-automatic weapons, shooting tourists and Port Arthur employees at random.

Bryant, 29, admitted to 72 charges over the Port Arthur killings when he appeared in the Tasmanian Supreme Court in Hobart, for the start of what was expected to be an agonising trial, at which hundreds of witnesses were due to be called to relive the horrors of modern Australia's worst massacre.

Only two months ago, he had pleaded not guilty to the same charges. Bryant's lawyer resigned soon afterwards.

The unemployed Hobart man, with long blonde hair, said to be a millionaire from inherited money and property, smirked and laughed as he stood in the dock yesterday, shielded by bullet-proof glass, and answered "Guilty" to each of the charges. People in the public gallery wept. Some relatives and friends of the victims fled sobbing from the court.

After Bryant's dramatic change of plea, John Avery, his new lawyer, said: "We have been doing a lot of talking over the last few weeks. I am grateful that the right decision has now been made." Mr Justice Cox, Tasmania's chief justice, will sentence Bryant on 19 November. The judge issued an edict to staff at Port Arthur not to comment until he hands down his sentence.

But the reaction was already clear. "We're immensely relieved," said David McDonald, a tour guide. "We were dreading the anguish of going through all this in court again. Now we can try to get back to normal." Walter Milne, a pharmacist whose wife and two young daughters were among those whom Bryant murdered, said Australia must now turn its

attention to tightening its gun laws so that a similar massacre never happens again.

Since the Port Arthur massacre, Australians have surrendered more than 130,000 guns under an amnesty introduced as part of a bid to reform the country's lax firearms laws. The weapons are crushed or cut in two before the owner's eyes, then tossed into an ever-increasing stockpile of scrap metal. The federal government in Canberra has taxed every Australian to build a fund of A\$500,000 (£250,000) to compensate gun owners under the amnesty, which runs until next October.

Gun laws are the province of Australia's six states. Their co-



Bryant: Worst mass killing in Australian history

torious reluctance to tighten their laws was shattered by Port Arthur, and most states have since introduced legislation to ban semi-automatic, military-style weapons of the type that Bryant, and gunmen in earlier mass shootings in Sydney and Melbourne, used. Tasmania, which once had the weakest laws, now has some of the toughest. Almost 10,000 banned guns have been surrendered in that state.

However, the surrendered guns are thought to be the tip of an iceberg. Estimates of the number of guns in Australia range from four to 10 million. The rural-based gun lobby is urging people to bury their guns rather than hand them in. And the Australian Coalition for Gun Control has criticised the new laws for still allowing large-scale and semi-automatic pistols, of the type Britain has banned since the Cullen report.

Roland Browne, the coalition's deputy chairman, said in Tasmania yesterday: "Our new gun laws have brought us up to the point that Britain was at before the Cullen report. Australia should draw on the Dunblane experience to minimise the availability of guns."

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Christopher is first to leave Clinton's team

President may announce new appointments today

Rupert Cornwell
Washington

By no stretch of the imagination could he be called a great secretary of state — a Marshall, an Acheson, a Kissinger. But if diligence and self-effacing decency were the sole requirements of his trade, then Warren Christopher would have no equal.

Yesterday, Bill Clinton was due to take his leave of his faithful retainer in a Rose Garden ceremony at the White House. As long expected, the 71-year-old Mr Christopher is the first of at least four Cabinet members to depart the Administration after the President's re-election, and return to his law practice in Los Angeles.

Deputy Secretary of State under President Jimmy Carter, and head of Mr Clinton's transition team after the 1992 election, Mr Christopher was the obvious choice for the State Department. But despite his endless travelling and infinitely patient negotiating, he will be remembered more for his crisp, cut suits and dashing ties than for his diplomatic achievement.

He has devoted huge amounts of time and energy to the Middle East. Yet despite constant visits to the region, complete with more than a dozen meetings with President Assad of Syria, and separate peace treaties between Israel and the PLO, and Israel and Jordan. Yet the region is arguably more dangerous today than in 1993, and an overall settlement further away than ever.

Richard Holbrooke, not Mr Christopher, was architect of the 1995 Bosnia settlement. Mr Christopher has largely delegated Nato and Russian policy to his deputy, Strobe Talbott, and has neglected China. To his credit, he has presided over a harmonious national security team, unscarred by the feuding between the White House and State Department that marked the Nixon and Carter administrations.

His personal civility and concern for staff are legendary. But this dour North Dakotan has not shone as a foreign policy salesman and has lacked clout in Congress to fend off heavy cuts in the department imposed by penny-pinching and isolationist Republicans. Two years ago he offered to resign, but Mr Clinton insisted he stay on.

Yesterday, George Mitchell, the former Senate majority leader and peace envoy to Ireland, was the marginal favourite to succeed him, thanks to his experience on Capitol Hill. Madeleine Albright, US Ambassador to the UN, is, however, very much in the frame, as is the outgoing Georgia Senator, Sam Nunn, and Republican Richard Lugar of Indiana.

Either of the last two are equally plausible replacements for the Defense Secretary. William Perry, who plans to step down early in the new term. Other departing top officials are expected to include Federico Pena, Transportation Secretary; Mickey Kantor, Commerce Secretary; Hazel O'Leary, Energy Secretary and Leon Panetta, the White House chief of staff. The first replacements could be announced by Mr Clinton as early as today.

The impending Cabinet reshuffle has now assumed such dimensions that Mr Clinton has postponed his holiday in Hawaii next week. Quick appointments are essential if he is to keep up the momentum of his re-election, and not allow attention to refocus on such embarrassments as foreign Democratic campaign contributions.

Yesterday did bring one boon for Mr Clinton — the announcement by Republican Senator Alfonse D'Amato of New York that his Senate Banking Committee would hold no further hearings on Whitewater, leaving the pursuit of that financial controversy in the hands of the special prosecutor, Kenneth Starr, who is expected to seek new indictments, possibly of White House staff, soon.



Welcome home: Warren Christopher, the outgoing US Secretary of State, smiles after being praised by Bill Clinton a speech in the garden of the White House, in Washington DC, yesterday. Photograph: Mike Theiler/Reuters

Broadcaster's gaffe puts candid views on camera

Rupert Cornwell

David Brinkley, the doyen of American television current affairs journalists, was to bow in glory out this weekend with the ultimate coup for his Sunday morning talk show — a one-on-one interview with the President of the United States. He may still get his interview, and it will certainly make good watching. But not for the original reason intended.

Early on Wednesday morning, with Bill Clinton's victory known for hours, the host of *This Week With David Brinkley* gathered with other members of ABC's election coverage team for some final reflections on the night. Mr Brinkley, however, seemed to think the session was off-camera.

"Four years of wit, poetry, music, love and affection," was his sarcastic assessment of a second Clinton term. "plus more goddamned nonsense." The President's victory speech in Little Rock a few minutes earlier had been "one of the worst things I've ever heard... totally unnecessary."

Twice his colleagues tried to warn him he was on the air, but the 76-year-old Mr Brinkley ploughed on. Unlike his fellow broadcasters, Mr Clinton was not creative: "He has not a creative bone in his body. Therefore he's a bore, and always will be a bore."

Unfortunately this eternally tedious politician had agreed a few days earlier to the *This Week* interview, the first after his re-

election and intended as a special honour to mark the retirement of a man who has been at the top of his business almost since it began.

In 1956, he was picked by NBC to cover the Eisenhower and Stevenson re-mating conventions. Shortly thereafter he began the *David Brinkley Report* that made him a household name almost to match the peerless Walter Cronkite.

Today he is the last active

'Clinton has not a creative bone in his body. Therefore he's a bore and always will be a bore'

practitioner from a TV generation that included Mr Cronkite, his former partner Chet Huntley, and the late John Chancellor.

Yesterday, the White House had not yet decided whether to go ahead with the interview, which would offer the ultimate contrast in styles. Mr Brinkley is celebrated for his dry, terse and increasingly cranky style. Mr Clinton is charming, effusive, and prone to talk as if there were no tomorrow.

Whatever else he may be, he is rarely boring.

Nasa mission blasts off to investigate life on Mars

Marcia Dunn
Associated Press

Cape Canaveral — A US spacecraft yesterday embarked on a 400 million-mile, 10-month journey to Mars, the first step in a decade-long effort to determine whether there has ever been life on the planet.

The Delta rocket is carrying the *Mars Global Surveyor*, to replace a Mars probe that mysteriously disappeared three years ago. It should reach Mars in September 1997 and, after six months of easing into a mapping orbit, begin scrutinising the Martian surface and atmosphere.

"It's the beginning of a long

sequence of missions ultimately whose goal must be to determine whether or not life was ever on Mars or even perhaps exists now," said Wesley Huntress Jr, the head of Nasa.

The *Global Surveyor* is the first of 10 US spacecraft to be sent to Mars over the next decade. It is the long-awaited successor to Nasa's last Mars

probe, the *Mars Observer*, which never reached its destination.

Nasa expects to launch a pair of relatively inexpensive spacecraft to Mars every two years until 2005, including a robotic mission to return Martian soil and rocks to Earth that should settle the debate over life on Mars.

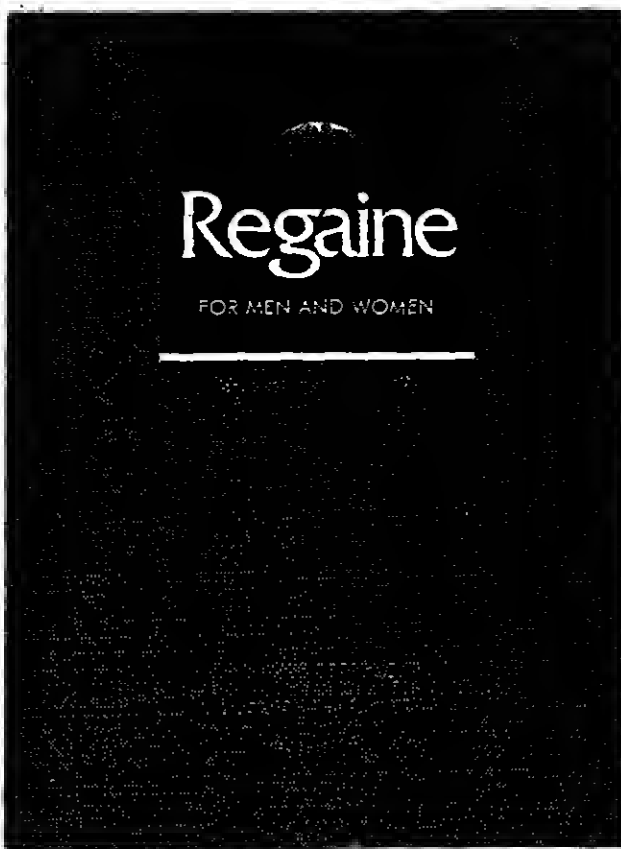
The *Global Surveyor*, made mostly

from left-over parts from the *Mars Observer*, will scout for future landing spots. The total mission cost is \$230m.

The *Mars Pathfinder* will follow on 2 December and, if all goes well, land on the planet on 4 July 1997.

As for sending humans, that will have to wait until at least the second decade of the next century.

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Chinese order blitz on deadly polluters

Ageing heavy industries are poisoning a nation, writes **Teresa Poole**

Xian — China has carried out a blitz on township industries which pollute the country, forcibly closing nearly 50,000 small factories. Paper mills, tanneries and dye factories were among the main offenders, accused of sluicing out chemical waste into rivers and drinking water supplies.

The National Environmental Protection Agency had set 1 October as a deadline for township

enterprises to clean up or face shut-down. The agency claims that by the middle of last month, 49,735 polluters had stopped operating, even though "several" local governments had not yet complied with the order.

Pollution in China has reached crisis levels, the combination of ageing dirty heavy industries and a decade of breakneck economic develop-

ment which has given scant regard to environmental consequences. For years, Chinese leaders have paid lip-service to environmental protection, passing a host of new laws but do-

ing little in terms of enforcement. A third of the country is affected by acid rain.

While environmentalists have welcomed the latest factory closures as evidence that Chi-

na was finally taking firm action on pollution, they point out that the measures only targeted township industries and did not touch the worst offenders — large state-owned enterprises.

In industrial Xian, for example, one of China's most polluted provincial capitals and well-known to Western tourists as the home of Emperor Qinshihuang's terracotta army, this

latest crackdown closed a mere 216 small factories. This will have a limited impact on air pollution and contaminated water caused by old textile, machine-processing and chemical factories and power plants.

Xian's pollution has reached imperial proportions. From a high-rise window, visibility is only about half a mile on a winter morning. The smog is worst in the west of the city, where chemical and power industries are concentrated. In the market next to the Xian San De Medical Chemical Branch factory, a woman said: "When it is going to rain, the air goes very thick and things get vague. You can't see a person very far away."

The figures are terrifying. According to Song Zhongjian, the vice-director of the city's Environmental Protection Bureau, every month 25 tonnes of dust falls per square kilometre, most spewed out from Xian's coal-fired industry and domestic heating systems. The annual output of sulphur dioxide has reached 190,000 tonnes; meanwhile, 80 per cent of Xian's domestic waste water flushes straight into the river system.

Yet Xian, the capital of inland Shaanxi province, is by no means the worst in China: in an official 1994 survey, it was placed 14th on the list of most polluted Chinese cities. Across China, the main problems are industrial waste and an overwhelming reliance on coal, which provides three-quarters of the country's energy resources and electricity. Coal consumption, currently at 420 million tonnes a year, is forecast

to rise to 540 million tonnes by 2000, and 600 million tonnes by 2010.

Xian is a typical Chinese smogstack city. Its 6.7 million residents and the city's industry burn 5 million tonnes of coal a year. Industrial use is high but domestic consumption is a also major factor. Ran Canli, 80, said: "Along my corridor, every household has a coal-fired stove, and when we cook, there is a lot of smoke and dust." Less than one in seven households uses gas-fired heating.

The government knows the answers to these problems, but cannot afford them. The official estimate is that China will have to spend 450bn yuan (£36bn pounds) over the next five years in an environmental clean-up. Xian, richer than other cities because of its tourist industry, is making a start. A 250-mile pipe is being laid from the gas-fields in northern Shaanxi, and by next July three-quarters of residents should be connected to the system. A new waste-water treatment factory is being built and by 2000, Xian wants to be treating half domestic outflows.

A day in Xian is almost guaranteed to produce a blinding headache, and even some of the locals are complaining. On the way to the airport, the taxi driver said it was worst in the early evening. "In the rush hour, the cars raise the dust on the road, and the smoke from the factories floats everywhere. In the winter, after it has snowed, you can see dark small particles in the snow. I am worried, but I can't do anything about it because I live here."



At risk: Chinese schoolchildren from Lanzhou, in Gansu province, wearing masks to protect against heavy pollution from nearby industrial plants

Photograph: AP

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REASON ENOUGH?



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significant shorts

Danish PM survives Rushdie row

Denmark's minority government survived a dispute over a visit by Salman Rushdie that nearly brought it down. Parties which would have held casting votes in a threatened no-confidence vote said the Prime Minister, Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, was inept but not pursuing a hidden agenda, as they had feared. Rushdie was told he could not come to receive a prize because his safety could not be guaranteed. The government then backed down. *Copenhagen — Reuters*

Bhutto allies booted out

President Farooq Leghari of Pakistan sacked the legislature of Sindh province. It is believed he will dismiss all four provincial assemblies, two of which, including Sindh, were controlled by the Pakistan People's Party of Benazir Bhutto, the Prime Minister, who was removed from office earlier this week. *Islamabad — AP*

Indian storm toll put at 234

The toll from a cyclone that hit India's main agricultural state of Andhra Pradesh on Wednesday rose to 234 and may climb. Most deaths were due to flooding, house collapses and electrocutions. *Hyderabad — Reuters*

Berlin falls for last bit of Wall

Several segments of the Berlin Wall, the victim of souvenir hunters and developers, may be saved for posterity as a political symbol and tourist attraction. *Berlin — Reuters*

Poll hopes fade for Romanian President

The chances that the Romanian President, Ion Iliescu, would be re-elected suffered a serious setback when his challenger in a second-round run-off vote, Emil Constantinescu, received the formal backing of the former prime minister Petre Roman. Mr Constantinescu and Mr Roman, who came second and third in Sunday's first round of the presidential contest, collectively command far more support than Mr Iliescu, who is a former Communist. If elected, Mr Constantinescu has promised to speed up economic reforms, cut taxes and press harder for Romania's early entry to the European Union and Nato. *Adrian Bridge*

Milosevic told to extradite war suspects

The top United States human-rights envoy warned President Slobodan Milosevic of Serbia to extradite war-crime suspects or face further political and economic isolation. Assistant Secretary of State John Shattuck said he told Mr Milosevic "that international financial assistance and access to the international organisations ... depends on much more co-operation with the International War Crimes Tribunal". Mr Shattuck said Mr Milosevic had provided access for foreign visitors to some known sites of massive Bosnian Serb war crimes, like Srebrenica in eastern Bosnia, and allowed the opening of the tribunal's office in Belgrade this summer. "But I made clear to him that that was not enough," Mr Shattuck told reporters. *Belgrade — AP*

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There's no Svengali, just devalued democracy

In Joe Klein's racy novel *Primary Colors* the presidential candidate figure is returned thanks to the efforts of a young aide - whose duties include serving a nightcap to the First Lady. (After she drinks it, she doesn't behave like one.) The character is said to be modelled on George Stephanopoulos, President Clinton's assistant. The novel's assessment of him is less hyperbolic than in real life, where he is variously described as electoral whiz-kid, election winner and polling guru. And now - Cherie, beware - Mr Stephanopoulos is over here, or at least he is telling correspondents in Little Rock that his plans could include a stint advising Tony Blair and Labour. The news seems to have inspired something close to panic. The manipulators are at hand. Our politics is about to succumb to Svengali. Vance Packard (*The Hidden Persuaders*) is about to be vindicated.

All of which is exaggeration and clear evidence that watching *The X-Files* does soften the brain. Mr Stephanopoulos is a clever operator, no dispute, but it wasn't him that won it for the President. To explain Bill Clinton's victory satisfactorily involves the US economic cycle, Newt Gingrich's miscalculation and Bob Dole's age - for a country with an age structure as comparatively young as America's to elect another Ronald Reagan would have indicated an extraordinary deference to

age. Bill Clinton also won because he proved amazingly resilient, because he was able to cohabit successfully with a Republican Congress and because he made astute choices among campaign tactics and staff. American voters did not select some phantasm created by psephological boffins; they voted for an all-too-human candidate with the resources of incumbency plus a great gift for empathy, and the ability to communicate on the box almost as convincingly as he does in the flesh.

Bill Clinton pursued political office since he was a student: he is a professional politician. Tony Blair is a lawyer only as a courtesy title - politics is his vocation. Ditto John Major and the rest. We can and ought, in a democracy, to say we expect those who seek office to hold to certain values, to see clearly that good ends do not justify bad means. But that does not amount to some endorsement of amateurism in the pursuit of office. We have seen enough of Westminster's failures to dismiss the Eighties' assertion that somehow the public interest would be better served by people lacking the skills of leadership and persuasion which make for success in democratic politics. And professional politicians have every right to reach for professional advice - on the workings of the mass media, on polling, on measuring and moving public opinion, on what we call, for want of a better term, "image" - the layered

perceptions of personality and party. Too often, still, people conceive democracy in simplistic terms, as if we were Athenians standing on a hill sticking up our hands. New techniques of projection have to be mastered. Politics, in short, is an accomplished business. What is surprising is not that there has grown up in recent times a body of people practised in it, but that we should be so sniffy about their contribution. So Mr Stephanopoulos, if he comes to Walworth Road, is welcome. But the idea that even this former Rhodes scholar can master, in months, the British politico-media system is unlikely.



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doctors, strategists and their like: it is what Lord Nolan identified yesterday as the declining value of politics that should really alarm us. Look at this paper's story yesterday morning, showing that 2 million eligible people, for one reason or another, will not even be on the voting register. Some of that is circumstance, but a lot of it is dismissive despair. No one can be entirely comfortable with the state of British democracy, and that is before worrying about the functioning of the House of Commons. But the public's antennae seem nowadays no less finely attuned to exhibitions of insincerity or incredulity by politicians. An army of spin doctors are not going to be able to obscure basic issues from the public view. It may suit both parties to try to hide the looming question of European Monetary Union but no amount of smoke will obscure the daily evidence of (favourable to the Tories) economic revival or (unfavourable) social dislocation and wasted human potential. Perhaps, to cite this week's trivial example, some people some of the time might be put off voting Labour because of Tony Blair's hair, or his stage manner. An image-maker might make some difference to that. But most of the people cannot really be fooled most of the time: they assess trivial and profound factors all the time, but they make their own proper sense of what politicians, including their image-makers,

are up to. We should not worry unduly about the effect of Mr Stephanopoulos, nor our home-grown versions. We should worry, instead, about electors' increasing disaffection on one side, and the questionable behaviour of MPs accompanied by their declining political influence on the other, and ponder how far these two developments may be connected. PR folk can spin their webs, but they cannot obscure the shadier corners of our shabby constitution.

Is this an opinion?

Well, that's it then. No need to look any further. Scientists at Cambridge have found the answer. And it is, as *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* said all along, 42. But hold on one nit-picking minute. Doesn't this call to mind that infamous philosophy final paper question, which went: "Is this a question?" The best answer in response read simply: "Yes; if this is an answer." Now we're told that the answer to life, the universe and everything is 42. But "life, the universe and everything" isn't a question, is it? And even if it were, would 42 be an answer? We, at least, are determined to remain unresolved on this matter.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Oxford will not shun Said's gift

Sir: The Congregation of Oxford University did indeed vote against allocating a particular site to the new business school which hopes to receive the massive benefaction of Wafiq Said but did not vote against the business school as such, nor against Mr Said, nor against the benefaction ("Oxford dons vote against business school project", 6 November).

Most of the 260 who voted against the proposal to let this particularly sensitive site be used were moved by concern about the undertaking made by Congregation over 30 years ago to leave the site green "in perpetuity". Some objected to the secrecy which had shrouded the project for a year or two and/or failed to understand the reason for this (that Mr Said wanted to avoid embarrassment to his son, who had been a student here). Some were worried that the foundation which would govern the business school might become aloof from the general democracy of dons by which all of the affairs of Oxford are run; some that the university staff would lose a cherished set of sports facilities. Only one individual, reported by you, delivered a tirade against the real or imagined business dealings of the benefactor. Most speakers on both sides, expressed gratitude for the money on offer.

Most of those present were satisfied that these qualms were either misplaced or were being answered. It seems at least to me that the vote will not result in any long-term set-back to the development of Business Studies, which has been established for many years now at this university. And if the views of the wider university community were tested in a postal vote it is likely that the decision would go a different way.

The problem was that a decision in a great matter was being pivoted upon the chance of use of a cricket pitch, and a coalition developed of disparate objectors. It would be unfortunate if Mr Said or the members of his foundation abstracted as a result of the set-back after devoting so much time and energy to this project. Oxford values its democracy more highly than its short-term reputation and the result, very frequently, is that people, inside this place as well as outside, receive slaps to the face when a warm embrace would be more immediately welcome. But in due course, great projects are brought off and objections subside and the debate is seen to have enriched rather than impoverished the ultimate result.

ANTHONY SMITH
President
Magdalen College, Oxford

Pakistan crippled by feudalism

Sir: I left Pakistan one day ahead of the dismissal of Benazir Bhutto. The news came as no surprise. I have been visiting Pakistan for 15 years and have never known the people so dispirited about the political, economic and moral state of the country. Life is increasingly difficult for those on salaries and pensions and the rise in the price of basic necessities is disastrous for the poor. Law and order has collapsed in Karachi and corruption is rampant everywhere. Educated young people are angry and frustrated and talk of emigrating. A simple change of government



will solve nothing. While the main parties are dominated by feudal lords who deliver the votes of the peasants who work on their vast estates, elections cannot represent the will of the people. It is the feudal system that lies at the root of the glaring social inequities. The most urgent need is for land reform. There will have to be a French Revolution before democracy means anything in Pakistan. Meanwhile, it is tragic to watch the breakdown of that beautiful country, potentially so rich in material resources and human talent.

ZOE HERSON
London NW7

Planning to beat nurse shortage

Sir: A commitment to more funds for the NHS is always welcome ("Dorrell wins £1bn more for NHS", 5 November). However, in addition to funding there are two basic issues which need to be addressed.

Firstly, bed shortages. This really means there is a shortage of registered nurses to care for patients. There are not enough nurses being recruited, and those that are are set to retire in increasing numbers as the century ends. The solution is to plan ahead; establish a workforce planning system that recognises the value of registered nurses and ensures there are enough in the system to meet demand.

Second, we are likely to see even more patients waiting in accident and emergency departments this winter before being given a bed. The Government has gone so far as to establish a system to monitor the

availability of specialist beds. The RCN has published a six-point plan which, if implemented, would avoid the problems arising in all sectors.

For example, hospitals should appoint bed managers - usually nurses with the authority to cut across departmental boundaries and manage admissions to the wards. Those that have already adopted this system have reported reduced waiting times. We wait to see if this and our other suggestions will be taken up.

CHRISTINE HANCOCK
Royal College of Nursing
London W7

Sir: Jonathan Ferrier is right ("Who wants to be a family doctor?", 1 November). The quality of GP care is one of the outstanding achievements of the NHS. However, GPs declined to be salaried employees like their colleagues in hospitals and public health.

Standards initially rose, and the ablest doctors were attracted to general practice. There were often bitterly disappointed candidates in the 1980s who could not gain access to the official vocational training schemes, which were heavily oversubscribed.

The invention of fund-holding may have been perceived as an advantage at first, but has become bogged down in bureaucracy. However, this deterioration in conditions was not necessary. GPs could (and many did) decline to be joint what was clearly intended to be an inequitable system, forming instead non-fund-holding consortia

to organise resources and access to secondary health care.

It is in all our interest to see the attractiveness of primary health care careers restored, but this must mean undoing the damage of the "internal market" and its hefty administration costs.

Britain has never produced enough of its own doctors, and general practice must suffer if hospital medicine or some other job altogether are seen as infinitely more appealing.

Dr MALCOLM C BATESON
Bishop Auckland, Co Durham

Forgiveness from death row

Sir: There are a number of issues in your story headed "Ex-Labour candidate drops threat" (25 October) which I would like to clarify.

No message of warning was smuggled in to me in my solitary confinement cell. Only my mother communicated with me in that way, which she did by wrapping messages in greaseproof paper and inserting them into a thermos flask. I was not released from 90 days' detention for giving evidence for the prosecution against John Harris. At that stage, I saw him through the eyes of my captors and torturers as a murderer. I did not threaten in Britain in March 1965 to tell the South African police that I was being asked to perjure myself by retracting my evidence. When

threats were made against me, I said I would tell someone in the Foreign Office whom I knew.

I did refuse to sign the prepared statement which retracted my evidence. I consulted the only person close to me in Britain at that time - my mother - and she advised against signing. I mistrusted the people asking me to retract, firstly because I thought it wholly futile and secondly because I feared entrapment.

However, I did sign a statement saying my evidence was unreliable because it was obtained under duress.

John Harris sent a message through Amnesty to me from death row in Pretoria saying that he understood and forgave me. His wife Ann repeated that message when she spoke to me a few months later in London. The depth of that undeserved forgiveness moved me profoundly. I saw John in a different light and I came to regret bitterly that I had not been stronger or wiser.

JOHN LLOYD
London WC2

Richard at home

Sir: We now know that Richard I was not a good leader of his country at all (Letters, 4, 5 November). Rather, he bankrupted the population in order to fight jingoistic campaigns against foreigners, and sought to identify himself with trumped-up religious causes, all purely for his own glorification. I think Westminster is exactly the right place to put his statue.

MARK BASSETT
New Malden, Surrey

Leaded fuel still poisons children

Sir: After all we now know about the toxic hazards from lead, I felt almost disbelief on reading Anthony Bevins' report (5 November) that the transport minister John Bawis is opposing an EU proposal to ban lead-adulterated petrol from the end of 1999.

This comes despite a UK government statement of 1995 that children's blood lead levels "remain at or not far below the level at which effects on the central nervous system have been demonstrated".

Numerous scientific and medical studies have shown that present levels of this environmental toxin are associated with learning disabilities and impairment of behavioural control. Lead is not the only factor, but common sense tells us that if you poison children's brains you must expect their behaviour and intelligence to suffer.

Four-star petrol is not the only source of lead - tap water is also a major problem in some areas. But although lead levels in petrol and children have fallen, the great scandal is that no car on the roads requires any lead whatsoever in its fuel if this is properly formulated. This statement goes against current belief carefully fostered by the oil and lead industries, but I stake my professional reputation on its accuracy.

DEREK BRYCE-SMITH
Emeritus Professor
Department of Chemistry
University of Reading

How De Valera outwitted Collins

Sir: Brendan O'Neill (Letters, 2 November) misses the point about Collins and De Valera. It is not a question of either being a hero or the other a traitor. There was, in fact, no difference of principle at all between them. It was simply a case of De Valera being the wiser politician of the two.

Both Collins and De Valera were Irish nationalists, seeking as far as possible to eliminate the British presence from Ireland. Both recognised that the 1921 treaty represented the best that they could get in that direction. However, both also realised that it fell far short of what their more romantic colleagues expected. Who would have to break the news to them?

De Valera won. It was Collins who got the poisoned chalice. Once the treaty had been signed, De Valera was left free to wash his hands of it and denounce Collins for a "betrayal" of the cause - despite the fact that, in Collins's place, he would have done no differently.

It made not the slightest difference which actor got cast as the Saviour in the nationalist passion play, and which as Judas. The play would have ended the same way.

MICHAEL W STONE
Peterborough

Sir: Brendan O'Neill says Neil Jordan, director of the film *Michael Collins*, has "rewritten Irish history". Such a reappraisal is long overdue.

If De Valera was the hero who stuck to his guns, how was it that he was able, only four years after Collins's death, to "ditch his principles" and take the oath of allegiance to the British Crown which enabled him to enter the Dail?

Towards the end of his long life, after many years as Taoiseach and later President, he said in private: "In the fullness of time history will record the greatness of Collins, and it will be recorded at my expense." But he never had the generosity of spirit to acknowledge publicly his debt to Collins, and the latter's role as a founding father of the Republic of Ireland.

CAROL PLACKETT
Newcastle Upon Tyne

Lottery U-turn?

Sir: You quote Virginia Bottomley (report, 6 November) as saying that Lottery money had to be taken into account when assessing the Government's record of expenditure on the arts. Two years ago, the Prime Minister stated at an English Heritage conference that "the money raised by the Lottery will not replace existing government spending". Has there been a U-turn, or will he ensure that the Budget restores grants to their levels of two years ago?

STEVE ADAMS
London NW3

Nae chance

Sir: A few weeks ago, hoardings around Scotland proclaimed, "Nae Tartan Tax with the Tories." Now we are being blessed with "You'll pay more with Mr Blair".

I assume the Conservatives and their advertising agency have some idea that they can appeal to Scots as tight-fisted versions of Rab C Nesbit. Until they start communicating to us in a civilised manner, they are not likely to gain many new supporters.

BRIAN MATHIESON
Hamilton, South Lanarkshire

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analysis

Can you be sure of Ken Saro-Wiwa?

When the Nigerian dissident and eight others were hanged a year ago, the West cast him as a hero and Shell as the villain. Richard D North, in Port Harcourt, tells a different story

A year ago this weekend, Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other Ogoni activists were hanged by the Nigerian authorities. This African, fighting for the rights of the indigenous poor of his minority tribe as so he claimed, they were raped by the Anglo-Dutch corporation Shell, was the epitome of the Anglicised product of Empire.

Thanks to the interest taken in Saro-Wiwa by organisations such as Greenpeace, The Body Shop and Channel Four Television, his story is well known. He became a founding member of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) in 1990; in 1993, Amnesty International denounced the detentions and trials of Saro-Wiwa and eight other Ogoni detainees as politically motivated. Amnesty deplored the ill-treatment of all the detainees and many of the witnesses at the military-controlled tribunal, and the government's inaction about a spate of security-force killings in Ogoniland in 1993 and 1994, in which hundreds of people died.

Eventually, the campaign forced the oil company Shell, whom Saro-Wiwa accused of implication in the rape of Ogoniland, to undertake the first environmental study of the Niger Delta.

The affair may have made little impression on the Nigerian government, but Shell was

shaken to the core. The company's self-esteem, always dangerously inflated, was shattered.

The affable and savvy sitcom writer and campaigner was pipe-smoking and poshly-spoken; he owned a large house in Surrey and sent a son to Eton. He was either a naive hero indifferent to risk, or a flawed maverick who made fatal misjudgements. "Ken was no saint," says Donu Kogharu, a London-based Ogoni journalist friend of his. "He was tremendously charismatic and sometimes very nice," she remembers. But she believes that he lost touch with reality as he was wooed by starry names in Europe and the US.

Ken Saro-Wiwa became a darling of the greener sections of London liberal society, but had been on the federal side during the Biafran civil war, and would thus have been reviled by liberals then. It has been argued that he was a federalist because he thought only a strong state would defend minorities like the Ogoni.

Whatever the case, within Nigeria he is widely believed to have feathered his nest when managing the Niger delta oil port of Bonny during the civil war. It would certainly explain his sudden affluence at that time. If he was a crook, it is no more than Nigerians expect of each other.

Saro-Wiwa finally and fatally enraged his country's military regime by demanding greater

autonomy for the people living in a patch of the swampy Niger delta. Given the politics of the country, the more strident of these voices were bound to be silenced. He seems to have been caught out by the military's haphazard alternations between permissiveness and oppression. And he did not help his cause by unleashing undisciplined and deeply disaffected young men on moderate former colleagues in the struggle, four of whom were murdered at a political rally in Ogoniland. Donu Kogharu believes her own father, one of the moderate leaders, was lucky to escape with his life. "I'm accusing Ken of incitement to murder," Donu Kogharu insists, when pressed.

Saro-Wiwa certainly believed that the campaign was a useful route to fame and wealth, and told friends that because it had an environmental dimension it pushed all the right buttons in the West. The mystery is how anything that started out as something with at least an element of a scam about it could have turned so darkly tragic.

His campaign was successful because it was directed almost as much at the Shell oil giant as it was at Nigeria's regime. Shell was the obvious target, for an ironic reason, as most of its Nigerian critics freely admit: the oil company is perhaps the most respectable institution in Nigeria.

"We've been here a long

time, and we expect to be here a long time," says Brian Anderson, the Nigerian-born white who runs Shell's operations there.

Shell started producing oil from the Niger delta 40 years ago. It was in Nigeria when the place was one of the bright stars of the continent, and expects to be there when and if hope returns. Meanwhile, like any large firm there, it funds armed police seconded from the state for the defence of its people, and necessarily deals with authorities of whom it strongly disapproves. Shell remains adamant that its only purchase of arms has been strictly within government-agreed codes.

Saro-Wiwa realised that Shell was amenable to pressure. It operates as a 30 per cent shareholder, and the largest private shareholder, in a Nigerian joint venture company, Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC), alongside Elf and Agip, with the Nigerian state oil company owning 55 per cent. You see the Shell sign everywhere in the delta, but it stands over facilities substantially owned by the Nigerian state, which must put in 55 per cent of the capital expenditure required to keep pro-

duction flowing – and clean. Shell's biggest problem is in wringing that share from the state.

SPDC produces about a million barrels of oil a day, half the country's total, which in a good year contributes around \$9bn dollars to the national exchequer, or three-quarters of the total government revenue (and about a third of the country's GNP). Some of the money is salted away by the country's leadership and their friends. Little of it reaches the delta where it is produced, and where six million people live in a soggy region of farms, forests and swamp about the size of the Republic of Ireland. Even less than its fair share reaches Ogoniland, where half a million of Saro-Wiwa's compatriots live in an area of about 1,000sq km.

The lively Nigerian economist Patrick Utomi once proposed that the oil ought to be given to the ruling elite once and for all: in return, they might give Nigeria back to the people. The Economist Intelligence Unit's regional report notes that the country's economy collapsed during the oil boom: too many important players gave up conventional work and concentrated on try-

ing to cream off a share of the bonanza.

Arguably, none of this is Shell's fault: as Brian Anderson never fails to stress, 3 per cent of the revenue that SPDC pays the government was supposed to come back to the producing areas. It's a sum close to Shell's 3.2 per cent share of the oil dollar, and is a sliver of the

country's average 75 per cent share of the barrel's worth. If the arrangement had worked, the delta might have become a fine area in a fine country.

"The money was not fully spent, and it wasn't wisely spent," Anderson insists, speaking in a code which roughly translates as: the money which isn't stolen is wasted.

A meeting with local chiefs at Sapele township in the north-west of the delta has the crude community spokesman Vis Kaites Ekarike rattling off a list of health and environmental effects, many of which probably aren't real or could not be caused by the oil industry. After the meeting, and in private, a local chief thanks the Shell people for the scholarships, the education schemes, the community hospitals and all the rest that the company has done locally – and much of it long before the disturbances of the early Nineties. He wants more, and knows that in a better society politics, not begging, would sort things out. He does not say – but it's true – that community leaders are usually as keen to cream off their share of the booty as anyone else.

Shell spends about \$20m a year on community projects (and eight times more on environmentally-orientated equipment renewal). "Things are

duction facilities and, crucially, the water and ground around them – it is hard to see what the environmental fuss has been about. In the delta there are plenty of rivers and creeks where there is an oil sheen. They remain a tiny minority, and the spills may as well have been caused by careless local boatmen as by the oil giant. For the most part, the delta is a vast, watery, deeply verdant region, lying under skies that are ordinarily tropical. Shell occupies a third of 1 per cent of the delta; even if it had devastated that area and 10 times more besides, and it hasn't, the damage would be a fraction of what is routinely claimed by campaigners.

What, then, of the famous flares? First, there are none at all in Ogoniland, where there has been no oil production since 1993, following community disturbances. Elsewhere in the delta, about a hundred flares waste a resource equivalent to a quarter of France's gas demand.

The flares do very little useful work, and they have been castigated by green commentators. Because oil production facilities bring people with money, locals congregate where SPDC has it. Some come to live near flares, which constitute free light and a means of drying root crops such as cassava.

SPDC is committed, and rightly so, to putting out all the flares, if possible by 2008, and about a quarter of them within three years. The latest project to harness around a quarter of the wasted gas involves deals with customers in southern Europe and \$5.5bn worth of new plant whose financing was highly problematic, not least because the Nigerian government, already heavily in arrears in its payments to SPDC, had difficulty raising its share.

The scheme has been an on-and-off affair for 20 years, but is now under construction. The deal was agreed in the weeks following Saro-Wiwa's execution, and seemed to some a symbol of Shell's venality.

For Anderson, the position is simple: if Shell pulled out of Nigeria, someone less committed would go in. The gas scheme was a sign of progress, not failure. On the revenue-addicted economy, he comments, "The curse of oil is a real issue – but it has brought a lot of good things. I believe very strongly that by being here we offer something for them to choose from." Besides, he adds: "No country in the world has ever left oil in the ground." This is not the observation of an angel, but then there seem to be few angels in this story.

It is hard to imagine any country extracting oil from the delta with less damage. What is harder to sense is whether Shell has been canny – still less, whether it has been at all noble in its arm-twisting in the Nigerian corridors of power. Certainly Shell could have done better. But would any company have done better than Shell?

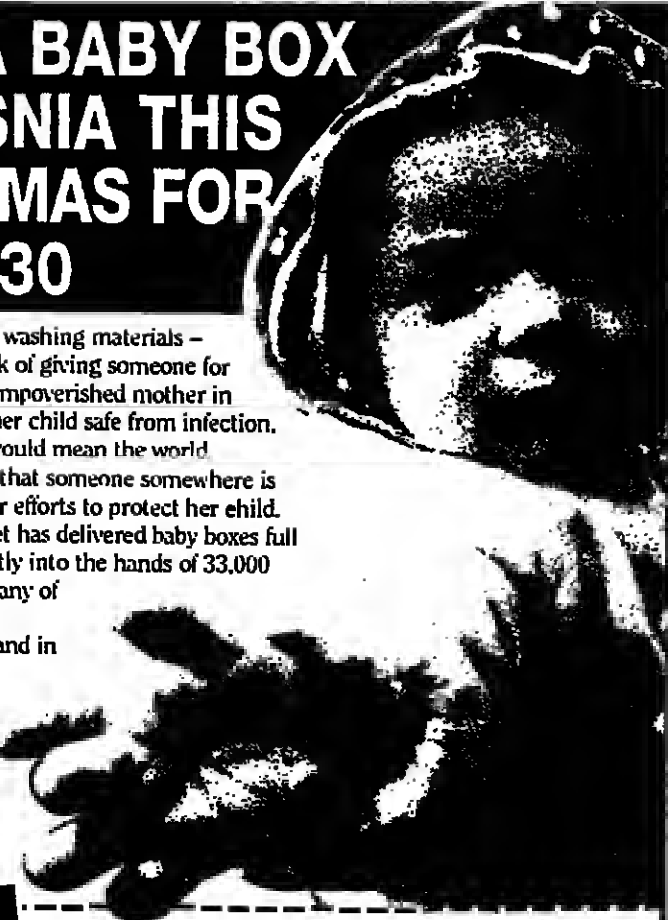


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Call 0990 600610 now to tell us how many baby boxes you would like to send.

OR please complete and return this form.

Please send _____ baby box(es) of £30 each on my behalf.

I enclose a cheque for £_____ (total amount) made payable to Children's Aid Direct

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Card number _____

Last three digits of Switch card no. _____ Switch issue no. _____

Expiry date _____ Signature _____

Name (caps) _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Telephone _____

Children's Aid Direct

Children's Aid Direct reserves the right to change the contents of the Baby Box

If you would like to send a message to a Bosnian mother, please send it with your donation

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A guy called Shirley and a girl called Sam



Miles Kingston

I once knew a BBC presenter who was a bit of a name-dropper. Actually, he was a lot of a name-dropper. He was such a name-dropper that he hated to admit there was anyone he did not know or had not met. Once he was in a conversation in which the name of Francis Wheen came up, and he was asked if he knew Francis.

"Oh yes," he said. "She and I have often worked together."

As Francis Wheen is a man, this was generally considered to be an own goal.

How we all laughed. But I know how that man felt now, because the same sort of thing has happened to me. Last week I referred to the obscure American poet Joyce Kilmer, now chiefly remembered for the poem starting "I think that I shall never see/A poem lovely as a tree", and said that I knew nothing about her life. Immediately letters started flooding in saying (in tones not unlike William Brown's) that I obviously knew nothing about life at all if I thought that Joyce Kilmer was a woman because Joyce Kilmer was a man, gosh, we thought everyone knew that Joyce Kilmer was a man, what about Joyce Cary, he was a man and he was called Joyce, fancy not knowing that Joyce Kilmer was a man ...

I printed a retraction and a semi-groveling apology but still the letters came, so I think I must stand up for myself and say that if men insist on having women's names and vice versa, they can't be surprised if mistakes do occasionally occur. I myself was misled from an early age when it comes to

the name Joyce, as the only Joyce I ever knew was my great-aunt Joyce, and she was definitely a woman. She was also the only woman I knew who always smoked when she did the washing up, but in the 1950s that didn't seem too bad, somehow. The thing is that she was called Joyce and she was a woman, and she was the only Joyce in my world, so I assumed naturally that people called Joyce were women.

What made me even more confused, though I didn't realise it at the time, was that Auntie Joyce was married to a man with a girl's name. My great-uncle was called Evelyn. He was the only Evelyn I ever met, and the only other one I ever heard of was Evelyn Waugh, so it seemed natural to assume that people called Evelyn were men. Later on in life I started to come across other people called Evelyn who displayed distinctly female characteristics, but early on in life I thought that Evelyn was a boy's name and Joyce was a girl's, so that when people were introducing my great-uncle and great-aunt

to people, there was no need for a conversation like this: "Have you met Evelyn and Joyce?"

"No. Delighted. Which of you is which?"

(Now I do realise that Evelyn Glennie is not a man. In fact, she does not even pronounce her name the same as my great-uncle. He was Eave-lyn and she is Ew-lyn. I know this because I once heard her correct Ned Sherrin over the pronunciation of her name on *Loose Ends*, and it is one of the great mysteries of the modern age that a supposedly profoundly deaf drummer can hear a single syllable being mispronounced ...)

Personally, I blame the women. They have been taking over men's names as quietly and insidiously as they have been taking over trousers and jeans. Samantha Fox can call her herself Sam Fox and get away with it, even if she sounds like a missing brother for Edward and James Fox. You can be a female poet called Stevie Smith and you can be a female actress called Billie Whitelaw but a man has to stick to a man's

name, so that when I first came across a song that started "Frankie and Johnny were lovers", I had to wait for a while to find out which was the man and which was the woman.

(That was in the innocent 1950s again. Nowadays you would have to wait to find out if Frankie and Johnny were both men or both women.) Another name with sexual ambiguity is Shirley, which can belong to a woman, as in Shirley Williams, or to a man, as in ... well, Shirley Brooks is the only example I can readily think of, he being a long-forgotten editor of *Punch*. I have also met girls who preferred to be called Charlie and several women who preferred to be called Jo and I think I once met a girl who said she liked to be called Andy, though I may have misheard her.

But I have only once in my life met a couple who had got the problem solved for once and for all, for the simple reason that they both had the same name.

He was called Robin. So was she. Nobody could ever get them mixed up.

Cancel that invite to the virtual dinner party

The more we move into the electronic age the more people want to meet real people. I happened to be in the United States earlier this week on the day of the presidential election and what struck me as most interesting was not the themes the commentators were banging on about – the likely low turnout, or the support for Clinton among women – but rather the way the final days of the campaign were fought.

Thus Bob Dole, aged 73, was widely applauded for spending the last 96 hours whizzing round America without even stopping for a couple of hours' sleep, making scores of five-minute speeches to supporters before getting back on to the plane. The President's schedule was only slightly less frantic. It was not relevant that the vast bulk of the nation's voters could never be reached in this way, and that they merely saw a series of clips on the TV that happened to come from different bits of America. Nor was it relevant that a whole array of new interactive technology enables ordinary people to communicate with politicians. In the land of the Internet, personal contact remains king.

By chance, I came across two other examples of the way in which the more advanced technology, the greater the evident need for personal contact. I was trying, never having done it before, to travel back by Concorde – trying, because 45 minutes out from New York an engine failed and the poor thing had to dump fuel and struggle back to Kennedy with, so to speak, its tail between its legs.

The experience encouraged a certain camaraderie among the passengers and it transpired that the American executive next to me had a schedule of Dole-like rigour. He had already had two other meetings in different US cities that morning using a company jet which delivered him to the Concorde ramp. He was then going to pick up another company jet at Heathrow to take him to Berlin by 2am, ready for an 8am presentation. The previous week he had been in Australia, Hong Kong, Taiwan and mainland China. He looked perfectly fit on it, but confessed that it was a dreadful way of living. Yet his company, one of the great hi-tech multinationals, was in such fierce competition that this was what he had to do. Telecommunications were not enough; he had to be there in person.

The other example concerns the BT-MTI takeover. News of this leaked towards the end of last week, forcing the companies to bring forward the announcement. How? Well, it seems that about six weeks ago a group of more than a dozen BT executives went to New York. They were spotted in the BA first-class lounge at Kennedy by a London analyst, who thought it odd that they should be breaking normal commercial practice by having all the senior management on one plane. He reckoned that there must be a very big deal brewing. This suspicion



Hamish McRae

In the land of the Internet, people have to meet each other more, not less. Personal contact remains king

was confirmed a couple of weeks later when they were spotted again. It could only be one of about four possible deals, and the investment bank concerned correctly guessed which one it was – and told its clients, who filled their boots with the stock.

You see the point: a giant takeover between these two communications companies required the physical presence of a large number of its senior people in the same place. They would have had available the most sophisticated electronic communications technology in the world, but that would not have done the job. The people had to meet.

So it is almost as though the electronic age, far from reducing the need for person-to-person contact, may actually increase it. In a way, this is comforting. It is good to know that we are not heading into a world of virtual dinner parties, sitting thousands of miles apart and toasting each other on video screens. In the business world, the process of internationalisation, made possible by better communications, means that people have to meet each other more, not less.

Or rather, some people need to meet more. And this is also disturbing, because this growing need for personal contact is associated with the growing disparities in our society: what one might call the performance culture, or the star society. It is now widely recognised that there has been an enormous surge in demand for the services of a few people – the top doctors, lawyers, film stars, financial analysts, politicians,

and so on – while the demand for the rest, even the good average performer, has fallen away. For someone with below-average skills, the outlook is bleaker still.

So people who come into this star category find themselves having to race around, trying to satisfy all these demands on their time. The fact that Bob Dole could appear on millions of TV screens increased the demand for him to appear in person, not the reverse.

At our own forthcoming election, the party leaders will have to race around in their hired planes, followed by aides, boosters and critics. No one will be interested in some third-rate MP in a boring constituency. Our top business people will continue to race around, busier and busier, while their companies' "downsize" the middle management. The fees of our top entertainers will soar as they sell to the global market, while the ranks of resting actors will swell.

Solution? I have none, because the pressures that have created the star society will grow for the foreseeable future. But we can perhaps lean against it, by making up our own minds as to what constitutes merit – which people are "real". Amateur actors can give enjoyable performances; middle management matters, and I know at least one "foot-soldier" MP who has wonderful, thoughtful ideas.

Blair can keep his romance and flowers

by Suzanne Moore

Not since Rod Stewart wriggled his bottom and asked his rhetorical question, "D'ya think I'm sexy?" have I been so excited. Tony Blair is coming down to our level, girls.

The great man himself is to walk among us in "feminine settings", according to Labour Party sources. Blair beamed, he will also talk to us in words of not more than four letters. None of this endogenous growth rubbish. No – he will talk to us about hills and housekeeping while dressed like Lily Savage. Let us not trouble our pretty heads about Europe and other such boys' talk when Blair can whisper sweet nothings in our ears about all the sweet nothings he is going to do for us when he gets into power. I had taken "feminine settings" to mean Ladies' lavatories and Ann Summers parties, but judging from this week's performance it means more pictures of Blair kissing the cheeks of babies instead of the backsides of businessmen.

They are all at it. Major is supposed to have had his voice lowered, and is boasting about his full head of hair. Ever since he took his jacket off, he has unleashed an almost Collo Firth-like power. The "arousal factor" that Clinton possesses for women has delivered him another term. Suddenly women are being talking about as a fluffy kind of block vote that can be persuaded one way or another by a hit of male grooming.

Astonishingly, astute commentators have pointed out that Blair is a man's idea of what appeals to women. Oh well, that's unusual for a politician. The mysterious F-factor remains as mysterious to them as ever. How could American women still go for Clinton, an adulterous draft-dodger, when they could have gone for an old war veteran who has been loyal to his wife? The idea that women respond to Clinton because of his politics, his empathy and the fact that whatever his mistakes he has chosen to be with a tough, clever and independent woman, is beyond them. Yet the advisers who have turned Cherie Blair into a silent but dutiful limpet underestimate our intelligence. Many women I have spoken to perceive Norma Major to be more independent and strong-minded than Cherie because of her resistance to playing the part that some may have wished her to play.

If image-making and media manipulation took place as it

once did – behind closed doors – it would be a different matter, yet the fact that all this tarring in is done in public simply increases female suspicion. This is hardly surprising, since women are the experts in masquerade. Femininity itself is a game that women learn to play from early on. It is not that women judge by appearances alone. Rather, we understand the work and motivation that has gone into changing appearances, and are therefore not entirely fooled by them.

More importantly, however, Blair may not be appealing to many women voters because of his desperation to appeal to a

small section of them. A campaign to woo the conservative women of Middle England is backfiring. The emphasis on family values, the presentation of Blair and his happy harem in their smart but casual clothing, his views on abortion, his pontifications about morality, leave as many of us cold. The words smug, smarmy, self-satisfied, are used again and again. What Blair's advisers (all male apart from a couple of "safe women", such as Harriet Harman and Tessa Jowell) fail to realise is that if anything unites women it is that they know what it is like to be patronised, and they don't respond well to it.

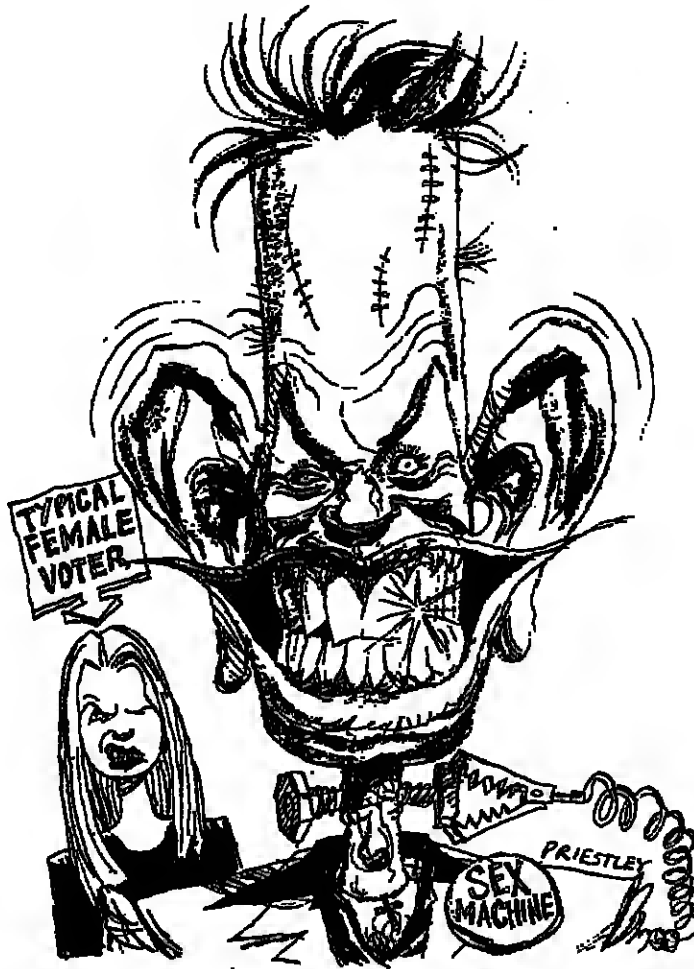
To be told, then, that we are to be further targeted because a couple of focus groups have become dissatisfied is not good news. The gap between politics as it is played out and the rest of life grows ever wider. Even the modernisers of the Labour Party appear to live in the 1950s, seemingly unable to distinguish between sex appeal and the appeal of men who are at ease with women. This homogenous group of female voters that decides elections on the basis of fancifully does not exist. When polled, women actually are interested in competence and the ability to manage the economy, just as they are concerned

with health, education and social issues. (Gosh, I'm almost making them sound like men. That can't be right, can it?)

What many modern women respond to, though – and I think they have responded to it in Clinton as they did with John Smith – is the appeal of a man who is comfortable with women, powerful women, whether they be colleagues, wives, advisers. Blair has fallen down here. His inner circle is male, the press machinery is run by men, and the cracks are beginning to show. Strappy women are relegated in favour of Harman-like clones, as unthreatening as they are unexciting. Clare Short is immensely popular, and if any of them cared to look outside the narrow world of Westminster they could quite easily see the kind of women that other women like are people like Patsy in *Ab Fab* – a drunken slut. The handing of the Blair agenda unfortunately means that someone like Patsy will never be Minister for Health. A Shadow Cabinet that can manage to patronise Barbara Castle – isn't she amazingly bold for a little old lady – doesn't bode well for any of us.

Once in power, Blair, we are promised, will loosen up a little. Another makeover beckons. Maybe he'll even stop grinning. Yet for all the packaging, some of us remain interested in the contents of his package. We don't care about his flyaway hair as much as we do about child care, about public transport, about pensions, about the minimum wage. These are not "women's issues", whatever that means. They are merely issues that affect more than half the population. There is nothing more off-putting than being deliberately wooed by an administration offering "female-friendly" policies. We don't want government to be friendly to us, we want to be part of it, which is a different thing altogether. All this talk appears incredibly old-fashioned, as though women were passively waiting to be given a few little treats to keep us happy. Why doesn't the Labour Party just send us all flowers, chocolate and perfume while they retire to the smoking room to talk about what is important?

In the real world, women are pushing forward, not on the basis of "shagability" but on the basis of credibility. What is unattractive about Blair, whether it's his hair or his teeth, can be cosmetically corrected. His conservatism, I fear, requires deep and painful surgery.



In the real world, women are pushing forward. We vote not on the basis of shagability, but on the basis of credibility



Sexpot for sale

"A so delicious as a spread on ice cream," says the label. The product, a jar of Louise Levene's Body Paint (L35-50) isn't mentioned on the packaging. The manufacturers assume that we are all fashionably familiar with the foodie phenomenon: slapping chocolate over your body in order to make yourself more attractive to the opposite sex, as popularised by Jane Horrocks in *Life Is Sweet*.

Just as starchy, unappetising puddings can occasionally be rendered more appetising by a dollop of Bird's custard, so we will be turned into a delicious little tart by garnishing yourself liberally with cocoa solids. It's been all the rage for some time. And we're not talking Harvey Nichols Food Hall here: the latest sex aid confectionery is back lining the shelves of neighbourhood stores such as British Home Stores, Tesco and Sainsbury's, ready for the Christmas rush.

It is on sale in BHS' "Christmas Store" departments, where it was introduced last year and became their best-selling line. Now it is back, part of a bigger range including Chocolate and Passion Fruit body paint and Hot Fudge Fantasy paint. A variation on the theme is Kissing Chocolate, sold with a small brush so that it can be applied to the lips.

You may, in a reckless, mischievous moment, have tried to imagine the woman in front of you with the trolley full of faggots and Ribena ever having sex. Now you will find yourself sickly fantasising about what she plans to do with her slug of love chocolate.

Not that anyone objects to a little harmless sexual experimentation. The peculiar thing about these sex aid groceries is the element of premeditation involved. Many a happy loving couple has no doubt splashed the double chocolate fudge about in a mad moment, but buying a special jar, warming it up and



Louise Levene tastes a jar of chocolate body paint

painting it on with the special brush provided? Where's the spontaneity in that? Besides, heating it up sounds dodgy – as anyone who has ever been scalded by a soupçon of ganache will testify.

Chocolate-coated sex is definitely a high-risk activity. Do the deed near an open window and wasp bites become a

nasty possibility. Allergic reactions can't be ruled out. People may not get as embarrassed as they used to about going to the doctors with personal matters, but "intra preputial erythema due to atopic chocolate allergy" is going to look pretty silly on your ooties.

The allergy might manifest itself in other ways. Chocolate is a major cause of migraine, remember. "Not tonight, darling. Last night gave me a headache."

Sex and sweeties have enjoyed a longstanding association, from the traditional heart-shaped box of chocolates through to cherry lip gloss and flavoured condoms. Condom flavouring is a surprisingly unsophisticated area. Scrupulous market research by Durex into the flavour preferences of the average condom user have led them to settle on strawberry, banana, ice mint and tangerine. Not exactly the peak of adult sophistication. Indeed, this infantile menu might easily be the flavour range for Panch and Judy toothpaste.

Of course, just because people buy a product doesn't mean they do anything more than stick it on a shelf – people bought *The Sweeney* series but they didn't necessarily take it to bed. The mere fact that silly women with more money than sense treat their friends to a jar of smearing chocolate rather than a set of novelty fridge magnets/Garfield knickers should not lead us to draw conclusions about the nation's sexual preferences.

People who are genuinely addicted to the practice of licking foodstuffs off their near-and-dear (rather than those who are simply addicted to hugging useless presents) probably use ordinary household ingredients anyway. Nutella makes a very acceptable substitute (they tell me) but the most interesting alternative must surely be Ice Magic, the chocolate ice-cream topping that hardens on contact... Anyone for seconds?

Smarm: the complete guide

Ingratating, crawling, fawning, servile, obsequious, sycophantic, suave, smooth, oily, unctuous. What a change a cow haircut can make. Those are the words listed in *Chambers Combined Dictionary Thesaurus* as synonyms for "smarmy", the currently fashionable epithet for Tony Blair, who only recently was being described as "dictatorial".

Occurrences of the word "smarmy" in our database of national newspapers include 21 sightings in the vicinity of "Blair". Smarmy scores for other politicians include eight for John Major, six for Heseltine, four for Howard, three each for Thatcher and Kenneth Clarke, two for Portillo, and one each for Bottemley and Prescott. Even "Monkhouse" only scores nine on the smarmy scale. Furthermore, while those scores have been accumulated over three years, Blair's smarminess has mainly happened in the past few weeks. Until the end of September, his total was only seven, with 14 additional sightings since 1 October.

The rise in smarmy Blair has coincided with a sudden decline in dictatorial Blair. In July alone, the database shows 14 instances of "dictatorial" in the same paragraph as "Blair", with another five in August and eight in September. Yet since 1 October there has been only one more sighting. April may be the cruelest month, but October and November are the smarmiest.

"Smarmy" is not among the 38 words or phrases in Erskine May's list of unparliamentary expressions. You cannot call an Honor-

able Member a "cad", "coward" or "criminal", nor even a "cheeky young pup" in the House of Commons without expecting the Chair to intervene, but you might get away with "smarmy" – unless, of course, the Speaker considered it no better than "pecksniffian cant" which was deemed to be unparliamentary in 1928.

"Smarmy", according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, dates back to 1909 as an adjectival form of the word "smarm" or "smalin" which had been around for 100 years. Originally just a verb for smoothing, especially of hair, its meaning gradually moved to include the implication of a real smoothie. Its colloquial nature seems to have prevented it entering the more respectable dictionaries of quotations. We found no reference in Antony Jay's *Oxford Dictionary of Political Quotations*, or Jonathan Green's *Dictionary of Insulting Quotations*, though a trawl through the latter suggests that the allegedly smarmy Mr Blair is only carrying on a long and noble British tradition. Nietzsche, in 1889, said: "The English are the people of consummate cant," while in 1953 the East German Communist Party included "paralytic sycophants" and "carnation-eating servile imitators" among the approved terms of abuse for the British. For an accusation of pure smarm, however, surely no one can outdo Disraeli's condemnation of Sir Robert Peel: "The Right Honourable Gentleman's smile is like the silver fittings on a coffin." There's one for the Blair-bashers.

William Hartston

ON THIS DAY 1939



Hitler escapes plot against his life 8th November 1939



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Dominion Resources to decide today on takeover bid for East Midlands

Chris Godsmark
Business Correspondent

The board of Dominion Resources, the US utility group considering launching a takeover bid for East Midlands Electricity, is expected to decide today whether to press ahead with a formal offer.

Senior Dominion executives were returning to the US last

night after evaluating a potential bid with their UK advisers, SBC Warburg. An announcement is likely by Monday.

A bout of profit-taking and mounting fears that the bid would be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission drove East Midlands' share price down 15p to 592.5p. The US power supplier revealed on Wednesday that it was

considering making an offer at not much above 608p.

Sources close to Dominion would only say that the board meeting, to be held at the group's Virginia headquarters, would take place "in the next few working days".

However, City analysts said the US company would have to pay around 670p a share for an East Midlands bid to be suc-

cessful, valuing the Nottingham-based group at £1.3bn.

Electricity analysts at investment bankers Kleinwort Benson advised investors to hang on to their shares and suggested the other three remaining Recs which did not face takeover bids, London, Yorkshire and Southern, could be undervalued by as much as a third.

This assessment was at odds

with the increasingly pessimistic views of some fund managers

who doubted whether the Government would allow two more Recs to fall into US hands so close to a general election. If Northern Electric was taken over by CE Electric and East Midlands falls to Dominion it would mean five of the 12 regional power suppliers were under foreign control.

A manager from one leading pension fund commented: "My

major concern is on the regulatory front. You just don't know what the DTI is going to do with these bids after it blocked the takeover of South West Water."

However, the suggestion that Dominion would pay only 608p

for East Midlands gave a massive boost to CE Electric's bid campaign for Northern, helping the US bidders to double their stake in the company.

By last night CE Electric

had bought a further 13.5 million Northern shares, raising its stake from 13.4 per cent to 26.7 per cent. Northern shares drifted lower all day, closing 7p down at 623.5p, well below CE's 630p offer price. It brings CE's stake close to the 30 per cent limit under takeover rules pending the bid's approval by the DTI.

David Sokol, the chairman of Nebraska-based CalEnergy, CE's main shareholder, said: "If you look at Dominion's proposed offer it would appear that our bid is too high. People generally regard East Midlands as a better REC than Northern."

Ailing Kwik Save to close 107 stores

Nigel Cope

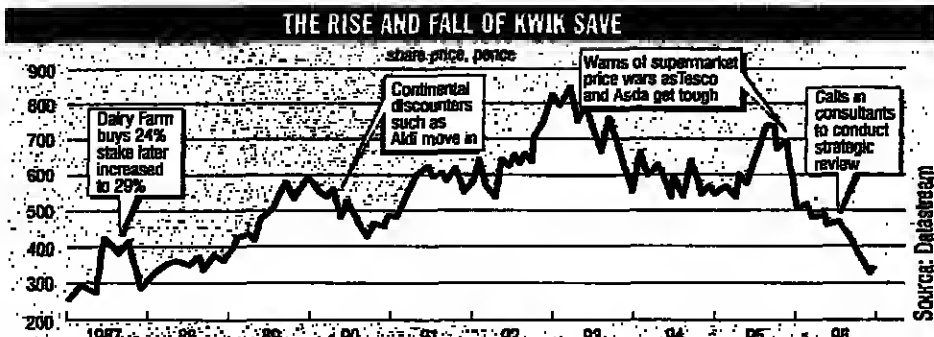
Kwik Save became the latest casualty in the cut-throat supermarket battle yesterday when it announced plans to close 107 stores, threatening 1,900 jobs. The closures are part of a wholesale shake-up of the beleaguered group which is caught between the supermarkets such as Tesco and Sainsbury and the cheaper continental discounters such as Aldi.

The restructuring accompanied a plunge in pre-tax profits from £125m to £2.8m, hit by an £87.5m provision to cover the cost of the closures. The shops will close between January and September though the company hopes either to redeploy staff or to achieve the cuts through natural wastage.

Chief executive Graeme Bowler insisted that in spite of its problems Kwik Save still had a place on Britain's high streets. "This is a company that is generating £3.5bn of sales, has nine million customer transactions every week and is making £90m profit."

His finance director Derek Pretty stressed the company's strong cash flow and balance sheet: "This is not a company which is on its knees."

The eight-month review was undertaken by Andersen Consulting, which was paid £4m in fees for the project. The result is that Kwik Save intends to retain its marketing proposition



as a discount supermarket while moving slightly up-market.

Store layouts and lighting will be improved. Trading hours will become more flexible to suit each location though it has ruled out a "7-11" convenience store approach. A new Kwik Save own label will be introduced, with the first ranges available from next spring. More emphasis will be placed on fresh foods, convenience foods, health and beauty products and over-the-counter medicines.

The stores will be made less cluttered with lower shelving. Fresh fruit and vegetable concessions will be moved inside the main store so customers only have to queue at one check-out.

Investment in staff training will be increased. There will be more investment in new technology with better point-of-sale systems and re-ordering

processes. The management team has also been strengthened, with Phil Smith joining as marketing director and new buying and personal directors appointed.

The total cost of the changes will be around £300m and will take three to five years to complete. Mr Bowler said Kwik Save would establish a position as a popular location for weekend and "top-up" shopping. He hopes to increase the average customer spend per transaction from the current £9.20 to over £10.

Kwik Save shares rose 17.5p to 321.5p, partly because the company maintained the dividend. However, City analysts were sceptical over the new strategy. Paul Smiddy of Credit Lyonnais said it was open to question whether it would increase sales.

Frank Davidson of James Capel called it "deeply unim-

pressive". He added: "Old, marginal stores lose volume. But what can they do? Perhaps they will eventually be taken over by Aldi. It would be a kindness."

Mr Bowler said the board had considered selling the business but denied that it had received any approaches from Aldi. No other approaches were received.

He said that Dairy Farm, which owns a 29 per cent stake in the business, was "supportive of Kwik Save and of its management."

Following the closure programme Kwik Save will have 872 stores. It currently has 23,000 staff.

In the 53 weeks to August Kwik Save's pre-exceptional profits fell 28 per cent to £90m. The final dividend was unchanged at 20p. Like for like sales were flat over the year.

Columnist, page 21



Battling: Graeme Bowler insisted Kwik Save still had a place on Britain's high streets

Costain falls into stormy waters again

Nigel Cope

Costain, the troubled construction group, was at the centre of controversy again yesterday after its shares were suspended pending clarification of its financial position and further details about asset disposals.

The company is expected to make an announcement regarding its disposal process and subsequent financial arrangements shortly.

The shares were suspended at 46p and the board called an emergency meeting yesterday afternoon.

The news caught the market off-guard as Costain was thought to be heading for calmer times after a £74m rescue rights issue in the summer. This saw Malaysian group Intira take a 40 per cent stake in the business.

Costain has been looking to sell its US coal interests and it is likely that this is the asset disposal in question. Lonrho pulled out of talks to buy the coal business in July. However, Costain said it had been approached by several other potential purchasers since then. The subsidiary made operating losses of £2.5m last year.

Only two months ago, Costain's chief executive, Alan Lovell, said the company was "feeling good about life".

This was in spite of the announcement in September of doubled first-half losses of £19m. The company blamed delays on starting contracts, including the controversial Newbury by-pass.

Management hoped to achieve a turnaround in the second half on the back of an order book said to be 15 per cent up at £636m.

The rights issue in July rescued Costain from receivership. It had been battered by poor investment in property and US mining in the late 1980s and by thin margins on contracting work.

Its shares were suspended in the summer ahead of an emergency meeting to pass the rights issue. The chairman, Sir Christopher Benson, then told shareholders: "If you vote against it there will not be a Costain and you will not be shareholders."

The shares resumed trading in July.

BA may have to give up a third of Heathrow slots

Chris Godsmark
Business Correspondent

The European Commission is understood to be demanding that British Airways give up as many as a third of its lucrative slots on US routes from Heathrow airport as a condition for approving its proposed alliance with American Airlines.

It also emerged that UK regulatory approval for the merger could be delayed until the middle of December.

Commission officials are examining the monopoly implications of the tie-up, which would give the two carriers control of 60 per cent of flights between the UK and the US, and are unlikely to make recommendations before April.

British Airways and American vehemently oppose the conditions, which may turn out to be tougher than those privately recommended by the UK regulatory watchdog, the Office of Fair Trading.

Last month the OFT passed its report to Ian Lang, the President of the Board of Trade, who has to decide whether to refer the alliance to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. The OFT is also believed to have approved the arrangement on condition that the two carriers divest themselves of a substantial number of Heathrow slots.

Mr Lang was thought to be about to reveal his decision, though sources yesterday suggested the announcement could be delayed until mid-December.

One reason would be that significant progress in the revived open skies negotiations between the UK and the US is unlikely until President Clinton forms a new cabinet. Frederick Peña, the US Transport Secretary, is not expected to keep a seat in the new Clinton administration. The US Government will only agree to the BA-American alliance if the UK signs an open skies agreement.

The latest proposals by the EC, which were presented to the two carriers last week, are believed to apply to UK-US routes where they would enjoy close to a monopoly. In services between Heathrow and Boston, Miami and Seattle, the alliance would give BA and American 100 per cent of the market.

Boots shrugs off price-fixing move

Tom Stevenson
City Editor

Boots moved yesterday to defuse worries that the OFT's recent challenge to retail price maintenance in non-prescription drugs might lead to a damaging price war.

Sir Michael Angus, chairman, said the decision to refer Britain's last legal price-fixing arrangement to the Restrictive Practices Court was disappointing but he said Boots the Chemists was well placed whatever its conclusion.

He added: "The company believes that retail price maintenance on over-the-counter medicines should remain in force because consumer interests are best served by retaining the service to local communities currently provided by pharmacists. Only a small proportion of

Boots the Chemists sales would be affected and past experience suggests that the business would emerge with increased market share."

John Bridgman, the OFT's director general, said three weeks



Sir James Byth, Boots chief executive

ago that a 26-year-old agreement which allows manufacturers to set prices on over-the-counter treatments such as painkillers and vitamins had cost consumers £180m a year on average through artificially high prices.

The move, which some analysts believe could lead to price reductions of up to 15 per cent and cut Boots' overall profits by as much as 6 per cent, was a victory for Asda, the supermarket chain, which has led a campaign to scrap the arrangement.

Sir Michael Angus was speaking as Boots reported a 9 per cent rise in profits before exceptional items in the six months to September. He described the half year as extremely busy for the company. During the six months, Boots sold its Children's World subsidiary to Storehouse for £62.5m, acquired the 50 per cent of DIY chain Do It

All it did not already own from WH Smith, executed a £300m share buyback and acquired Lusia, a French skincare group, for £115m.

There were profits improvements across the board, although AG Stanley, the Pads and Homestyle DIY group, remained £6.9m in the red (£7.6m loss in 1995). Boots the Chemists, the core pharmacy chain, saw profits rise from £164.3m to £184m. Halfords increased profits from £9.2m to £11.9m and Boots Opticians' contribution rose from £4.1m to £4.5m.

Do It All reduced its loss sharply thanks to an 8 per cent rise in sales from ongoing stores, but because Boots assumed full responsibility for the company in June its share of the loss only fell from £4.8m to £3.7m. Investment Column, page 22

Clarke calls on Labour to clarify windfall tax

Michael Harrison

The Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, yesterday sought to exploit Labour disarray over the windfall tax by calling on the party's leadership to spell out clearly which industries and companies would pay the levy.

Mr Clarke also urged the Commons Trade and Industry Select Committee to call the

shadow chancellor, Gordon Brown, to answer questions about how the tax would be structured and levied.

His challenge follows reports that Mr Brown and the Labour leader Tony Blair are split over how widely the tax should be applied.

Earlier this week, Mr Blair's press secretary, Alastair Campbell, said the tax would be levied on "privatised monopoly

utilities". Ed Wallis, chairman of the electricity generator, PowerGen, subsequently told MPs on the committee that on this basis it would escape the tax since it was not a monopoly, holding less than 20 per cent of the generation market.

A spokeswoman for Mr Blair then said that the party had not changed its position, suggesting that it could also take into account market power, how the

companies had been initially priced and whether they had been lightly regulated.

Labour has also been approached by the re-elected Clinton administration and told that the tax should not unfairly discriminate against the US utilities that have bought up British regional electricity companies in the last 18 months. Three Recs have so far been taken over by US companies at

a cost of £4.4bn and two more are in the firing line.

Mr Clarke described the levy as "a tax on jobs, bill and pensions", saying it would put prices up, put people out of a job and hit shareholders.

"The Labour Party are getting deeper and deeper into the mire of their so-called windfall tax on the privatised utilities. Tony Blair or Gordon Brown should put out a clear statement

saying which industries and which companies will pay this tax. They invented the tax and they should now describe it honestly and clearly."

Estimates of how much the tax might raise vary from £5bn to £10bn. Much will hinge on how widely it is applied and whether the two biggest utilities - BT and British Gas - escape the net or are left with only modest windfall tax bills.

German jobless total still rising

Inno Karacs
Bonn

Germany's short-lived economic recovery appears to be faltering. A flurry of unexpectedly depressing data was compounded yesterday by the latest jobless figures, which showed that seasonally adjusted unemployment in October had crashed through the 4 million barrier for the first time since the war.

The jobless rate across the nation now stands at 10.6 per cent - a 0.2 per cent rise on the previous month. As in the bleak winter months last year, unemployment is rising steadily in both east and west Germany.

The figures are particularly disappointing because they correspond to a period of relatively strong economic activity. Germany emerged from its mini-recession in the second quarter, and until recently most economists had forecast a sustained recovery well into 1997.

Last week, the six leading economics institutes said they agreed with the government's prediction of a growth rate of around 1 per cent this year, and

2.5 per cent in 1997. However, the latest industrial output figures showed a dip instead of the forecast rise, and the Federation of German Chambers of Commerce revised its growth forecast to between 1.5 and 2 per cent.

Attaining the government target, especially on the budget deficit, is crucial in the battle to meet the Maastricht convergence criteria for European monetary union. Even at the officially forecast growth rate, Germany was on course to miss the budget deficit requirements. The shortfall stems largely from the growing burden of unemployment benefits which, on current trends, will only become heavier.

On Friday, the government is expected to reveal a tax shortfall of between DM2bn and DM3bn. The Finance Minister, Theo Waigel, threatens to close the gap by cutting welfare spending. The ruling coalition of Christian Democrats and Free Democrats is already bitterly divided over the issue, with the Free Democrats effectively vetoing any rise in taxes. The alternative is to cut government department spending.

STOCK MARKETS					
Index	Close	Day's change	Change(%)	1996 High	1996 Low
FTSE 100	3935.70	+14.60	+0.4	4073.10	3632.30
FTSE 250	4413.90	+8.70	+0.2	4568.60	4015.30
FTSE 350	1964.90	+5.50	+0.3	2022.10	1816.60
FT Small Cap	2162.61	+1.71	+0.1	2244.36	1954.06
FT All Share	1940.28	+6.08	+0.3	1994.54	1791.95
New York	8177.71	+96.53	+1.6	8094.23	5032.94
Tokyo	20991.52	+399.19	+1.9	22666.80	19734.70
Hong Kong	12775.47	+272.77	+2.2	12775.47	10204.87
Frankfurt	2729.19	+37.90	+1.4	2734.82	2253.36

Statistics as of 7 November

INTEREST RATES					
Index	1 Month	3 Month	6 Month	1 Year	10 Year
UK	6.13	6.69	7.81	7.76	7.73
US	5.41	5.69	6.26	5.94	6.58
Japan	0.41	0.59	2.50	2.75	-
Germany	3.08	3.31	5.91	6.36	6.85

*Bank of England base rate

CURRENCIES					
Index	Close	Day's change	Change(%)	1996 High	1996 Low
£/\$	1.5417	-0.41c	-1.5805	1.5417	1.5417
£/DM	0.6091	+0.19	0.5327	0.6091	0.6091
£/¥	1.5164	-0.04c	1.4196	1.5164	1.5164
\$/DM	1.1385	-0.24c	102.359	1.1385	1.1385
\$/¥	97.1	-0.3	84.3	97.1	97.1

*US dollar index

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COMMENT

As recently as 1993 Kwik Save was flying high and Dairy Farm (part of Jardine's), which had built up a 29 per cent stake since 1987, had seen its investment double.

Yet another disaster for the Keswick brothers

This has not been a happy few years for the brothers Keswick and their sprawling Jardine Matheson international trading empire. First came their disastrous investment in Trafalgar House, which gobbled up £300m of Jardine's money before the Keswicks finally saw the light and bailed out. Then came the Jardine Fleming debacle. If it is possible to blame Robert Fleming for the neglect and culture of non compliance which allowed this to happen, it must fall doubly so on Jardine Matheson. Robert Fleming, the other partner in this Hong Kong based securities operation, at least had the excuse of being 10,000 miles away on the other side of the world. Jardine's, on the other hand, is not only based in the same building as Jardine Fleming, it occupies the floor immediately above.

And now we have Kwik Save, another of Jardine's ill researched and then neglected investment strategies. It was not always so. As recently as 1993 the supermarket group was flying high and Dairy Farm (part of Jardine's), which had built up a 29 per cent stake since 1987, had seen its investment double. Return on investment was around 50 per cent. Crucially, Kwik Save had virtually no competition.

But in the early 1990s Continental discounters like Aldi and Netto came in, cutting prices to levels Kwik Save could never match. At the same time, Tesco, Sainsbury, et al. were introducing value lines of their own. If you wanted to save money you could

do so in a swanky superstore, not a tired, neglected branch of Kwik Save. For reasons we can only guess at, Kwik Save management chose to do nothing. Instead of improving their existing stores, they spent their time opening more and more outlets. Too many of its stores are now under-invested and in the wrong location. The shares have halved in the last year and the enviable return on capital figures have been squandered.

For Dairy Farm, the problems are acute. Simon Keswick may have been putting a brave face on it yesterday, but the UK is not his only headache. Dairy Farm's supermarket businesses in Australia and Spain are also struggling. Yesterday's review is a step in the right direction. Brightening up the shops and removing their terrible clutter will make them seem less like a Polish discount store. Introducing an own label will help margins. For the time being, however, the Keswicks are going to have to resign themselves to the fact that their hoped for exit of a bid from the Continental discounters is not going to materialise.

Meanwhile what to do about Jardine's more generally? Mind your own business, might be the Keswicks' answer, for this is a company registered in Bermuda, controlled by the Keswicks and without any significant following in the London based investment community. The fact that it is also a company seemingly devoid of all corporate purpose or focus is really neither here nor there, apart, that is, to those unfortunate enough

to be outside shareholders in a Jardine controlled enterprise such as Kwik Save.

A worrying policy shift from Japan?

Interpreting the Delphic remarks of overseas finance officials is always a hazardous business, particularly when the gentleman in question happens to be Japanese. All the same it does appear from comments made yesterday by Eisuke Sakakibara, head of Japan's International Finance Bureau, that a potentially very dramatic shift has occurred in Japan's exchange rate policy. Mr Sakakibara said that Japan's economic recovery was now sufficient to bring an end to the trend of yen depreciation.

This is, of course, only a statement of opinion but the fact that it comes from the man known as "Mr Yen", the official credited with arresting the yen's devastating appreciation against the dollar in the mid-1990s, lends it a certain weight. If indeed policy has shifted, if indeed support for the dollar is going to be abandoned, and if Japanese interest rates are going to be heading higher again, does this fundamentally alter the investment landscape? The answer has to be an emphatic yes, notwithstanding the relatively sanguine reaction of markets yesterday.

For the effect will be to remove the prop that Japanese money has been providing to

the US bond market. That in turn will mean that more American money is going to have to flow into funding the US deficit. That's going to require higher US interest rates which means less money for equities. Everyone knows that Wall Street is inflated and over-valued but nobody seems yet prepared to call the party to a halt. The Dow's euphoric reaction to President Clinton's half victory may yet prove to have been the last all too frenzied dance. And if that is the case the hangover is going to be a mighty one. But then again Mr Sakakibara may not have meant that at all.

Waiting for sheriff Lang to make a move

The Virginians rode into town yesterday and did the boys from Nebraska a big favour. Dominion Resources' miserly valuation of East Midlands Electricity makes CalEnergy's offer for Northern Electric look positively generous. Until sheriff Lang puts on his six guns, however, we will not know whether it has done either of them any good.

When it comes to sharp shooting, the President of the Board of Trade might as well be Jimmy Stewart in *The Man Who Shot Liberty Bells*. But, as he has shown before in blocking electricity bids, he is lethal with a sawn-off shotgun, for he seems able to make almost anything pass for competition policy

these days. On the face of it, there are few policy issues here Mr Lang could use as an excuse for reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. He has already allowed a number of other American bids for regional distribution companies, so he might be hard pressed to deny these two. CalEnergy's junk bond rating does the company no favours but since its core gearing is typical of the US power sector, this should not stop it from being allowed to bid.

The real question, as ever, is a political one. Ian Byatt, the water regulator, persuaded Mr Lang to block both bids for South West Water on the grounds that it would reduce the number of comparators in the electricity distribution sector would fall from a dozen at privatisation to just three if the two US bids are allowed. Mr Lang would have no difficulty in using this as a pretext for sending both the Nebraskans and the Virginians packing.

However, such a move would send all the wrong signals to the re-elected Clinton administration. It would also give the Americans ample scope for exacting their revenge on BT which needs US regulatory approval for its £12bn tilt at MCL. But it is nearing election time here as well so there is always room for the rogue card. Watching the Americans ride off with nearly half the electricity industry might be too much even for Mr Lang.

Kleinwort slashes underwriting charges by 30%

Peter Rodgers and Magnus Grimond

City moves to cut the cost of raising capital gathered pace yesterday when Kleinwort Benson raised £120m for Bodycote International in a rights issue where the underwriting commissions were slashed by almost 30 per cent, saving more than £700,000.

The announcement followed hard on the heels of two rights issues managed by Schroders which achieved commission savings of 8 and 11 per cent.

All three moves are part of a campaign to introduce competition into charges to persuade the Office of Fair Trading not to refer the City to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. Until recently, charges have been fixed, leading to accusations of a cartel.

Institutions welcomed the Kleinwort announcement, which involved the auction of 53 per cent of the sub-underwriting compared with 36 per cent

in Schroders' most recent issue, for More Group, and 28 per cent for the first auction, for Stakis last week.

But there was criticism of BZW for not cutting commissions in a £38m capital raising for Mayflower Corporation, the vehicle body manufacturer, also announced yesterday. BZW organised a placing and open offer which also involves underwriting commissions.

The shares went to an immediate premium, which one institution claimed was an indication that the underwriting risks were low enough to justify a cut in commission. The shares closed 8p up at 143p.

Bodycote also rose 31.5p to a new high of 742.5p, but as a result of the auction, sub-underwriters were paid just over 1 per cent compared with 1.5 per cent on a fixed commission scale. Kleinwort reduced its own commission pro rata, bringing the total saving to £701,000 or 29.3 per cent of the equivalent fixed commission cost.

Mayflower's total underwriting commissions were 2 per cent. Khalid Rahim, a managing director of BZW, said the issue was smaller than Bodycote and very finely priced. He said BZW had been instrumental in developing the techniques tested in the Stakis rights issue, and the investment bank had a number of ideas that would benefit companies raising capital in the future.

Mayflower is raising the money as part of the funding for the £137m acquisition of SCSSM Holdings, a supplier of metal pressings and body sub-assemblies to the US automotive industry. Bodycote International, the metal technology to insurance group, announced the £57.5m acquisition of Bruksens Thermotreat, a Swedish heat treatment company, accompanied by the £120m rights issue.

The deal, which is expected to be earnings enhancing before any savings from cost cuts, will give the British group a leading position in European markets.

Booming retail sales dampen Budget hopes

Michael Harrison

Fresh doubts were cast over the prospects for a tax-cutting Budget yesterday as retailers reported high street sales at their most buoyant level for eight years.

The Confederation of British Industry's latest distributive trades survey shows that the number of retailers reporting higher sales is the highest since August 1988. Orders placed with suppliers are also rising at their fastest rate since January 1988 while the number of retailers stocking up in anticipation of increased demand is higher than at any time in the past 12 months.

After a slight dip in September the boom in sales has returned, said the CBI. For the first time since January 1990 all areas of retailing are experiencing some sales growth.

But it is most pronounced in grocery, confectionery, the off-licence trade and clothing and footwear. Sale of furniture, carpets, hardware china and DIY goods also benefited from the strong performance of the housing market.

Alastair Eperon, chairman of the CBI's distributive trades survey panel, said: "October's pick-up in annual retail trade is good news for retailers. They will also be reassured that the three-monthly moving average

of underlying growth strengthened in October, indicating that consumer confidence is holding up."

However, the CBI is cautioning that the strength of consumer demand reinforces the need for the Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, to opt for a cautious and prudent Budget. Adair Turner, the CBI's director general, voiced concern yesterday that a tax giveaway Budget might have to be paid for with higher interest rates which would, in turn, put upward pressure on the pound and hit exporters.

The CBI survey covers 15,000 retail outlets employing 40 per cent of all high street staff.

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Middlesbrough

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business

Pubmaster sale earns £170m for Brent Walker

Tom Stevenson
City Editor

Brent Walker yesterday disposed of Pubmaster, its chain of 1,650 mainly tenanted pubs, in a deal that leaves the William Hill bookmaking operation as its only remaining trading division. The £170m sale, which was backed by NatWest Ventures, gives up to 10 per cent of the chain to its management, led by former chairman John Brackenbury, and paves the way for a refloat of the pubs in two or three years.

The deal also holds out the possibility that Brent Walker shareholders, who have watched their company collapse under a mountain of debt, may end up with some value for their stakes. It emerged yesterday that the company had put off plans to dispose of William Hill, preferring to let the bookmaker trade out of its recent difficulties before negotiating a debt-for-equity swap with its bankers that would leave shareholders with a heavily diluted stake in a company focused exclusively on the betting shops.

John Leach, chief executive, said the £171m proceeds of the sale represented the best reasonably achievable terms in current and foreseeable market conditions. Mr Brackenbury and colleagues are expected to take their full allotment of 10 per cent of Pubmaster's shares in exchange for an investment described only as a "seven-figure sum". The NatWest-led syndicate of backers also includes Prudential Ventures, HSBC and Bank of Scotland.

Brent Walker built up the Pubmaster chain after acquiring a number of pubs in 1988 from Grand Metropolitan, from whom it was later to buy the William Hill chain. A year later it added the Tollemache & Cobbold and Cameron brew-



John Brackenbury: Would make a fortune on stock market

eries, together with their estates of tied pubs, and it has since expanded through acquisitions from Allied Breweries and Whitbread to become one of the country's largest pub landlords.

Brent Walker sold the chain after deciding Pubmaster risked an acceleration of its loss in market position because of the holding company's inability to match the rising levels of capital expenditure across the industry. As on-trade beer volumes have declined over the past five years, increasing amounts of money have been poured into doing up pubs to try and grab a larger share of the slowly declining market. Pubmaster has been unable to compete.

A spokesman for NatWest Ventures said the deal repre-

sented good value at only 11 times earnings per share, compared to price/earnings ratios of up to 30 for the more fashionable managed pub estates such as Regent Inns and JD Wetherspoon. He said Pubmaster's financial backers intended to bring it back to the stock market within three years in a deal which looks certain to make sizeable fortunes for Mr Brackenbury and his fellow directors.

Brent Walker's remaining trading operation, William Hill, remains affected by the National Lottery, although Mr Leach said it was starting to benefit from a cut in betting duty, the introduction of slot machines into betting shops, and betting on the Irish lottery.

Comment, page 21

Five years on, Burton looks smarter

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY TOM STEVENSON

This year, the shares, up 0.5p at 145.5p, stand on a forward multiple of 15. With sales currently nearly 8 per cent ahead and a consumer boom in prospect, they still look reasonable value.

Boots looks to pastures new

Boots shares have been under a cloud in recent weeks thanks to the OFT's decision to home in on non-prescription drug price maintenance. The UK's last legal price-fixing agreement. With 80 per cent of the group's profits coming from the core chemist chain, the conclusions of the Restrictive Practices Court are of more than passing interest. Some estimates suggest a price war could knock up to 6 per cent off group profits.

Even without that worry, there are concerns that the main business has gone ex-growth although the company has gone to great pains to convince analysts that is not the case. Whatever it says, however, it is hard to escape the

conclusion that moves to set up pilot operations in the Far East and Holland represent a tacit acknowledgement that real growth will have to come from pastures new. For investors, that transforms the risk/reward profile of what has hitherto been a safe, predictable and cash-generative stock.

Figures for the six months to September were impressive, even given the buoyant consumer background. Boots The Chemists powers on with healthy like-for-like growth and an improvement in the unspecified gross margin. Elsewhere, the various components of the disastrous 1990 Ward White continued their convalescence.

Underlying profits at Halfords were 19 per cent higher with own brands proving increasingly popular. Do it All, which Boots now owns completely, having bought out former partner WH Smith, is on the mend. It may break into profit next year. Even Fads owner AG Stanley reduced its loss, although at £6.9m in the half, from sales of just over £50m, it is still pretty unacceptable.

Recent comments from a range of consumer-sensitive companies, including Whitbread and Marks &

Spencer, confirm a real improvement on the high street and Boots is benefiting from this. The market remains suspicious, however, and yesterday Boots's shares closed 10p lower at 61 1/2p.

On the basis of profits this year of about £540m and maybe £600m next time, the shares trade on a prospective price/earnings ratio 12 months out of no more than 15. That represents a sizeable discount to many of its retailing

Mayflower finds new focus in US

Yesterday's £165m (£101m) deal to buy South Charleston Stamping & Manufacturing by Mayflower Corporation should more than make up for the British body panel maker's being gazzumped in June for Pullman, the US suspension equipment maker which was taken over by Tenneco. Shareholders are being asked to stump up £38.2m in a three-for-20 placing and offer at 126p, but the 8p rise in the shares to 143p shows the enthusiasm for the deal.

The euphoria looks justified, given that SCSTM is much more within Mayflower's focus than Pullman. The deal should propel its existing US panels operation from the number 15 position in the market to number four and bring in a string of blue chip customers including General Motors and Mercedes, as well as increasing the current business with Ford. Already the dominant player in the UK market for outsourcing panel work, the enhanced global reach proved by SCSTM, added to its existing design and engineering expertise, should enhance its credibility with the big motor manufacturers.

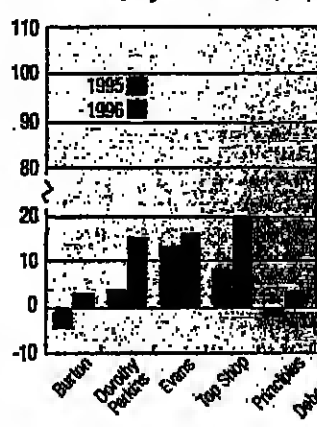
Mayflower is paying \$137m in cash and will take on borrowings of \$27.8m as a result of the deal. That will send gearing to a heady 200 per cent or so, after the goodwill write-off, but interest cover should remain above seven times, at worst. The company says the acquisition will be earnings-enhancing from day one, despite the lack of substantial rationalisation benefits from integrating the two businesses. The long-term prospects for this business look good, with less than 10 per cent of manufacturers' requirements outsourced in the UK at present, a figure that only rises to 30 per cent or so across the Atlantic. In the short run though, SCSTM increases the group's exposure to the volatile volume end of the market, accounting for 30 per cent of sales in future. Hoare Govett's forecast of profits of £32m next year, when the deal kicks in, would still put the shares on a forward p/e of 17. High enough.

BURTON: AT A GLANCE

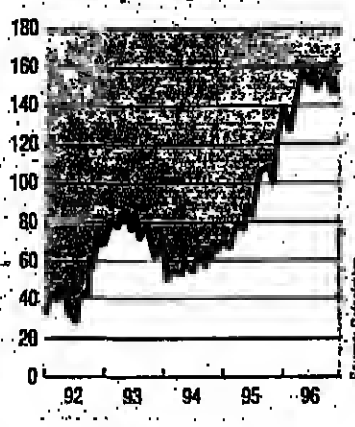
Market value: £2.13bn, share price 145.5p

Trading record	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
Turnover (£m)	1.76	1.81	1.88	1.88	2.01
Pre-tax profits (£m)	-0.8	16.3	41.1	98.6	152
Earnings per share (pence)	6.8	16.3	41.1	98.6	152
Dividends per share (pence)	1.93	2.0	2.0	2.2	2.8

Profits, by business (£m)



Share price (pence)



Directors' pay still three times level of inflation

Roger Trapp

Senior company directors are still awarding themselves pay rises three times the level of inflation, according to a survey from Monks Partnership published today.

However, there are signs that boardroom largess is beginning to be tempered. The rise in total earnings of chief executives and full-time chairmen actually fell from 8.8 per cent to 7.7 per cent in the past year, while their basic salary increases

barely remained broadly static at 5.3 per cent, the survey found.

The latest edition of the remuneration advisers' annual study of boardroom pay in 750 UK parent companies also showed that other directors enjoyed total earnings increases of 5.2 per cent, but that basic salary rises were higher, at 6.8 per cent.

There are no 1995 figures for these executives because the Stock Exchange only changed its listing rules to require greater disclosure of remuneration for all main board directors in October of that year.

Considerable variations in pay exist between different sectors of the economy. The biggest pay increases for chief executives came in leisure and publishing, where salaries jumped by 9 per cent.

The largest increases in total earnings were the 11.8 per cent awarded to chief executives in food, drink and tobacco and the 8.1 per cent achieved by other directors in engineering and electronics. The lowest rises in

total earnings were the 4 per cent given to chief executives in consumer goods companies and zero for other directors in building materials and construction.

The level of international involvement undertaken by an executive and the functional responsibilities incurred can also affect salary levels. In larger companies, "international involvement may command a premium of up to 25 per cent of base salary," says the study.

The report, *UK Board Earnings*, also finds that companies

are increasingly taking up an alternative to the traditional share option schemes in an effort to provide senior executives with incentives. More than 60 per cent of listed industrial and commercial companies with a turnover of more than £50m reported long-term incentive plans (LTIPs) in which main board directors might be invited to participate.

The maximum award varies greatly, but the overall median is 60 per cent of base salary, rising to 75 per cent for companies

with a turnover of more than £50m.

Three-quarters of the LTIPs are awarded in shares, while earnings per share, share price and total shareholder return are the most popular measures of performance.

Alison Smith, the report's editor, said Monks was able to take advantage of the vast amounts of information about main board directors' pay in annual reports and compare the differentials of a range of directors rather than just chief executives.

Motorsport shares are racing away

Shares in Brands Hatch Leisure yesterday raced to a sizeable premium on their first day of trading on the London stock market. Floated at 157p, the shares closed at 177.5p, valuing the company at £38.8m.

Run by 39-year-old chief executive Nicola Foulston, Brands Hatch came to the market in order to raise £9.3m to cut bank debt and provide finance for capital expenditure. Brands Hatch runs four motorsport circuits, including the eponymous track in Kent (right).

The circuit is used most weekends for a wide range of national and club, saloon and sports car races and for motorcycle events, which can attract thousands of spectators.

During the week it is used for practice sessions and for car racing courses, and is available for activities such as go-karting and corporate hospitality. But its income-earning power is heavily concentrated on weekends.



Daimler motors ahead with turnover of £31bn

Daimler-Benz, Germany's biggest industrial group, yesterday provided further proof it was on the road to recovery from record losses in 1995 by indicating that sales grew strongly in the first nine months of 1996 and predicting higher earnings in the second half of the year.

Daimler said turnover in the first nine months expanded to DM75.9bn (£30.6bn), up 11 per cent on an adjusted basis, an increase that came largely on the back of its car and truck unit, Mercedes-Benz.

Juergen Schrempp, chairman, hailed the sales increase as evidence that his plans for streamlining the company and targeting shareholder value were paying off. "This development confirms the course of focusing on a growth strategy and stronger earnings," he said.

Analysts agreed, saying the tough measures Daimler had undertaken should see profits in the second half easily above the DM827m achieved at the operating level in the first six months.

"These figures are quite positive," said Lothar Lubinski, analyst at Enskilda Corporate. "They show Daimler is finally on the right track." Shares in Daimler, which have climbed steadily since the summer, edged up to DM93.20.

Sales at Mercedes-Benz, which for years has been Daimler's cash cow, climbed 8 per cent to almost DM57bn in the first nine months of the year. Demand for Mercedes models such as the E-class and the new SLK roadster sports car were

behind stronger car business, but Daimler warned that the company's truck division still faced an uphill battle in a tough market.

The company's aircraft unit, Daimler-Benz Aerospace, reported lower sales of DM8.29bn than a year ago, but Daimler said that on an adjusted basis - accounting for restructuring at Dasa - turnover climbed 18 per cent.

Dasa has been Daimler's Achilles' heel, producing most of last year's red ink and fight-

ing a tough battle through its involvement in the Airbus consortium against market leader, Seattle-based Boeing Corp.

Daimler's information and financial services unit, Debis, saw sales increase to DM9.76bn from DM8.57bn.

The figures mark the latest chapter in Daimler's recovery after reporting a massive DM5.7bn loss in 1995 - the largest loss ever reported by a German company.

But slashing unprofitable businesses and other stream-

lining measures helped Daimler return to profit in the first half of this year.

Although the company has already closed several unprofitable units, it is considering a massive restructuring aimed at further increasing profitability and hopes to finalise such plans at a supervisory board meeting on 23 January.

Although investors have welcomed the restructuring plans, the company overhaul has reportedly led to strife within Daimler.

IN BRIEF

• Hambro Insurance Services raised profits by half to £453m before tax in the six months to September on turnover up 22 per cent to £50m. Christopher Sproborg, the chairman, said there had been substantial management and organisational improvements.

• The stores group Burton confirmed that it expected to have all its divisions, which range from Top Man to Debenhams, involved in mail-order trading over the next two to three years. The move follows the acquisition earlier this year of Innovations and Racing Green, two catalogue retailers. Burton announced a 54 per cent rise in profits to £152m for last year as it curbed discounting in its chains and higher charge card transactions boosted sales by 7 per cent.

• UniChem, vying with Gebe of Germany in a £650m bid battle for Lloyds Chemists, discounted a report that it would move 10 per cent of Lloyds' 924 outlets to supermarkets if it won. "If you ask me, are we going to have another 100 [pharmacy] licences in supermarkets, then that is not my intention. Most of them are not close enough to warrant it anyway," said Jeffery Harris, chief executive. However, he admitted that part of the benefit of a merger would come from relocating some pharmacies. UniChem's offer document is expected to be published early next week.

• The number of Americans applying for state unemployment benefits unexpectedly fell last week. First-time jobless claims dropped by 11,000 to a seasonally adjusted 331,000.

• Swiss Bank, Switzerland's third-largest bank, saw nine-month net profits rise 27 per cent from a year earlier, though no figures were given. It said full-year net profit growth would be "a few percentage points" below its original forecast of 33 per cent before extraordinary charges of Sfr1.4bn (\$1.1bn) as earnings growth slowed in the third quarter.

• Intel, the world's largest semiconductor maker, expects revenues and gross profit margins to be sharply higher in the fourth quarter due to strong demand for personal computer chips. The maker of the popular Pentium and Pentium Pro microprocessors said fourth-quarter sales were expected to be "significantly higher" than the \$5.14bn generated in the third quarter. Gross margins, a key indicator of profitability, should exceed the third quarter's surprisingly strong rate of 57 per cent.

• Sony's group profits tripled in the six months ended September as a weaker Japanese yen boosted overseas sales of camcorder video recorders, televisions and its game player, PlayStation. Analysts said earnings growth was more modest if currency savings were ignored. Net profits for the Sony group, which includes domestic and overseas subsidiaries such as movie maker Sony Pictures Entertainment Inc, tripled to 51.74bn yen (\$461.9m). Sales rose 23 per cent to 2.53tn yen.

• The feelgood factor is returning, according to the Britannia Building Society's quarterly survey, but the 18-34 age group is much more confident than older people. Some 44 per cent of young people feel better off, compared to just 19 per cent a year ago, and against a third of middle-aged and just 18 per cent of the over 55s.

COMPANY RESULTS

	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
All Holdings (F)	29.3m (27.1m)	3.45m (3.03m)	12.0p (10.8p)	6.0p (5.75p)
J. Mollie (F)	784.9m (735.8m)	42.84m (32.93m)	18.93p (12.07p)	5.2p (5.75p)
Boots (F)	2.13bn (1.94bn)	256m (227.8m)	19.1p (15.3p)	5.2p (5.75p)
Burton Group (F)	20m (1.8m)	151.8m (98.8m)	7.9p (6.2p)	1.5p
Chancellor Island Group (F)	5.05m (4.51m)	653,000 (648,000)	4.07p (3.44p)	1.5p (1.25p)
Culture's Holdings (F)	4.68m (2.34m)	65,000 (732,000)	0.10p (0.71p)	0.25p
Hambro Insurance (F)	50.17m (41.15m)	4.53m (3.03m)	3.76p (2.75p)	1.85p (1.65p)
Intel (F)	3.51bn (2.22bn)	2.8m (125.5m)	14.61p (51.58p)	20p (20p)
Porter Chemicals (F)	35.65m (37.3m)	2.3m (2.1m)	1.65p (1.75p)	0.25p
J. Smith (F)	17.21m (17.84m)	2.84m (3.44m)	27.48p (23.14p)	6.5p
Swire (F)	2.37m (2.18m)	115,297 (77,829)	3.86p (2.51p)	1.25p (1.25p)
Swirey India (F)	138.1m (171.7m)	10.2m (8.1m)	6.7p (5.3p)	2.5p
SWP Group (F)	9.81m (8.1m)	409,000 (767,000)	1p (1.3p)	0.25p
Waters House (F)	12.65m (13m)	3.96m (3.57m)	10.84p (10p)	3.5p (3.15p)
Yates Bros Wilson (F)	34.38m (29.23m)	4.26m (3.18m)	6.1p (5.8p)	1.44p (1.28p)

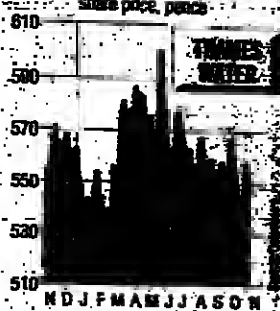
(F) = Real (F) = Interim (F) = Nine months

market report / shares

DATA BANK

FTSE 100
3900.4 - 35.3
FTSE 250
4394.3 - 19.6
FTSE 350
1949.2 - 15.7
SEAQ VOLUME
803.3m shares,
39,131 bargains
Gilt Index
93.36 - 0.44

SHARE SPOTLIGHT



Talk of gilt market difficulties send stocks tumbling

MARKET REPORT

DEREK PAIN

stock market reporter of the year

Shares and government stocks nose-dived as rumours swirled of difficulties in the gilt market. The Bank of England's interest rate stance on interest rates and sterling's strong performance were other influences which helped push Footsie down 35.3 points to 3,900.4 and lowered government stocks by around £1.

Goldman Sachs confirmed a senior gilt trader, Andrew Duthie, had resigned but denied his departure was related to any particular event.

The market, however, had got hold of a story that the US investment house had suffered big losses following the recent Bank of England auction of £1.5bn of 8 per cent 2015 stock.

Attempts by Goldman to unwind its gilt position had made the market aware of a large overhang which, it was claimed, helped explain the recent underperformance of gov-

ernment stocks compared with other bond markets.

If it had been assumed that last week's interest rate increase would help the stock market, removing some of the fragility from shares. In the event the advance has been poorly received. With the Bank of England piling on the pressure with calls for even higher rates Footsie is more than 90 points below the level ruling before the new era of dearer money was ushered in.

Sterling is adding to the agony, so are higher oil prices. There are already signs the market is bracing some of its more embattled profit forecasts and if the pound/dollar price movement continues downgrades are likely to become much more widespread - and more pronounced.

There was also signs of the tail wagging the dog as futures activity became increasingly bearish and volatile with Mon-

day's large trade, which seemed to be banking on a share slump, unsettling traders.

Corporate activity, real and rumoured, which has helped shares hit new peaks is now seen as a two-edged sword with Whitehall seemingly much more inclined to interfere in bids than it used to be.

With this month's Budget adding to the uncertainty London's decoupling from New York looks even more startling. New York is the world's dominant market and London will never be free of its influence. But in recent times it has appeared that only transatlantic calls make a deep impression; gains do not.

New York's overnight record following the Clinton victory did provide a short-lived knee-jerk response but the market was soon deep in gloom, ignoring a strong US opening. Footsie closed at a two-month low.

Waters moved against the tide, largely on hopes of more merger deals with electricity distributors. Thames surged 1p to 553.5p and Anglian 14.5p to 564.5p. Enthusiasm on the electricity pitch was dimmed by what is surely a US sighting shot for East Midlands Electricity, off 15p to 623.5p.

Northern fell 7p to 623.5p as US bidder CE Electric raised its stake to 19.9 per cent through ABN Amro Hoare Govett. It acquired 6.5 million shares at 630p.

The generators managed to move ahead again with National Power up 1p to 434p (after 439.5p) and PowerGen 3p higher at 544.5p.

Allied Domecq fell 11.5p to 476p ahead of next week's figures and Compass, the catering contractor, eased 20p to 598p as SBC Warburg placed 12 million shares at 592p.

Kingfisher rose 6.5p to 626p as talk of a cheerful circular went the rounds and Standard Chartered rose 9.5p to 606p on New West Securities support. Holiday shares relayed after the referral to the MMC. Airtronic dived 61.5p to 651.5p and Inspirations 16p to 82.5p. Another round of profit warnings helped erode sentiment. Applied Distribution fell 25.5p to 37p, engineer Mackie International 31p to 156.5p and Calfens, the con-

venience stores chain, 2.75p to 18.25p. A cautious statement lowered Waverley 3.25p to 33.25p.

Chelston Village, owning the football club, dropped 11p to 96.5p after the resignation of Peter Middleton. Booker, the food group celebrating clearance of its Nurdin & Peacock takeover with a 5.5p gain to 402.5p. Panmure Gordon is keen on the shares, putting a 600p target on them. Kwik Save, helped by its unchanged dividend, put on 17.5p to 321.5p.

Brands Hatch avoided the market skid, motoring to 177.5p from its 157p placing. Uzo, a furniture retailer, held at 167.5p. Société Générale Strauss Turnbull is enthusiastic looking for profits of £2.3m this year and £3.5m next. Builder Bellway placed through Charterhouse Tully nearly 5 million shares at 323.5p, raising £1.6m. The share gained 5p to 342.5p.

TAKING STOCK

Shares of Waverley Mining Finance, down from 116p to 59p this year, are "substantially undervalued", suggests Martin Potts, analyst at stockbroker Williams de Broe. He believes asset backing is 114p a share with listed investments worth £23m and the group's Scottish coal assets £33m.

Jarvis, the construction group which has surged ahead since acquiring one of the rail maintenance companies, rose 6.5p to a 126p peak; the shares were 17p at the start of the year. There is talk the group could be on the verge of another significant acquisition.

Bed and breakfast tax deals are alive and well. Around 110 million British Gas shares went through at 180p as the market closed. BGas held at 189p.

Share Price Data

Prices are quoted except where stated. The yield is last year's dividend, rounded up by 20 per cent, as a percentage of the share price. The price earnings (P/E) ratio is the share price divided by last year's earnings per share, excluding exceptional items. Other details: 7.5m p/s is £5 dividend; 8.5m p/s is £5 dividend; 9.5m p/s is £5 dividend; 10.5m p/s is £5 dividend; 11.5m p/s is £5 dividend; 12.5m p/s is £5 dividend; 13.5m p/s is £5 dividend; 14.5m p/s is £5 dividend; 15.5m p/s is £5 dividend; 16.5m p/s is £5 dividend; 17.5m p/s is £5 dividend; 18.5m p/s is £5 dividend; 19.5m p/s is £5 dividend; 20.5m p/s is £5 dividend; 21.5m p/s is £5 dividend; 22.5m p/s is £5 dividend; 23.5m p/s is £5 dividend; 24.5m p/s is £5 dividend; 25.5m p/s is £5 dividend; 26.5m p/s is £5 dividend; 27.5m p/s is £5 dividend; 28.5m p/s is £5 dividend; 29.5m p/s is £5 dividend; 30.5m p/s is £5 dividend; 31.5m p/s is £5 dividend; 32.5m p/s is £5 dividend; 33.5m p/s is £5 dividend; 34.5m p/s is £5 dividend; 35.5m p/s is £5 dividend; 36.5m p/s is £5 dividend; 37.5m p/s is £5 dividend; 38.5m p/s is £5 dividend; 39.5m p/s is £5 dividend; 40.5m p/s is £5 dividend; 41.5m p/s is £5 dividend; 42.5m p/s is £5 dividend; 43.5m p/s is £5 dividend; 44.5m p/s is £5 dividend; 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The cynical managers, now long in the tooth, might tell Hoddle that he is wasting his time and will, inevitably, be let down

The dressing-room at a football club is a very special type of place for those granted entry. It can even become a player's second home. It is a club within a club, with very few secrets.

I was once told of a player who beat his wife. In that particular dressing-room there was also a thief, a university graduate and two very heavy drinkers. Otherwise it was a typical cross-section of players. In company they would generally be very good, very generous and very funny people to be around.

Apparently the player who beat his wife was not a high-flier. He earned fairly ordinary money by the standards at the time. His best chance of international honours

came when England played the rest in the weekly five-a-side.

The manager of the club in question was, I know, very aware of the dressing-room's individual characters but showed little or no inclination to get involved. His preference was to turn two blind eyes. He picked the team, hoped they won, and moreover hoped he kept his job. His involvement and influence over the lives of his players began and ended with their performance and the result they produced.

Unfortunately, some years later the player in question finished up in jail and subsequently, tragically, took his own life.

Football managers generally tread a very precarious tightrope, try-

ing to balance their responsibilities to the club and results with their wider responsibilities to the individuals for whose performances they are also responsible.

Managers vary. Some choose to subjugate deep personal disapproval in stomaching all manner of personal and social inadequacies in their players, in the interests of that ever-elusive victory.

Others demand a much stricter code in terms of what is and what is not acceptable behaviour. This wide judgemental policy is pursued, in some cases, no matter what the cost might be in performances, points or personal popularity.

Paul Gascoigne is a footballer of very exceptional talent, a player who



HOWARD WILKINSON

on his best days can be right up there with the best. His personality has prevented him producing as many

of these days as he should have. His inclusion in the England squad for tomorrow's match in Georgia may well have been touch and go anyway, even without his off-the-field diversions.

In those circumstances Glenn Hoddle must have known that to omit Gascoigne from the squad would have been the easier, safer and definitely more popular option. He well knew he had more to lose than he had to gain.

Hoddle's position is obviously slightly different to that of a club manager because his players are representing their country. If playing for Rangers equates to a consular post in Andorra, representing England is like being the ambassador to the

United States. However, this is only Hoddle's third game and at the moment this particular loose cannon has, since he took over, remained loaded and primed, but not discharged.

So why did Hoddle get involved? Managers are eternal optimists, all of them endowed with a totally illogical, even arrogant belief that they can change and affect the player with whom all before have failed. They also know they have to win, and that requires playing the best players available. That never changes.

Some like, even need, their players to be the sort of people they like, even admire. They believe and are committed to affecting their players in the widest sense. Hoddle, it

would appear, feels this way about his job. He also understands his very wide responsibilities to the game and must therefore place a heavy onus on players to share that responsibility.

Gascoigne must now, once and for all, accept that responsibility and appreciate the risk taken on his behalf by his manager. The cynical managers, now long in the tooth, might tell Hoddle he is wasting his time and will, inevitably, be let down.

If Gascoigne does not appreciate this great risk there can be no second chance. If he does, we could see a person and a career saved. Years ago, a similar managerial intervention might have seen a life saved.

Holyfield still in pursuit of grail

Ken Jones, in Las Vegas, assesses the twice world champion's prospects against the formidable Mike Tyson tomorrow night

The morning after Evander Holyfield lost the undisputed world heavyweight championship to Riddick Bowe on 13 November 1992 his associates advised retirement from boxing. "You've got more in the bank than you are ever likely to need and there isn't anything left to prove," Lou Duva said.

So what was it that kept Holyfield in the ring: fame, the warrior instinct, a fear of anticlimax or, as Mike Tyson who is defending the World Boxing Association title against him tomorrow believes, the effect of an acquisitive nature?

Barely six months on from an effort that had left him utterly exhausted, Holyfield gained a 12-round decision over Alex Stewart in Atlantic City. No longer connected with the Duvas, who had switched their attention to Lennox Lewis, and struggling to overcome the moderate resistance of an opponent Tyson blew away in one round, he looked awful.

Remarkable as the story became when Holyfield took back the WBA and International Boxing Federation titles from Bowe, the tests he underwent for cardiac problems following a subsequent loss to Michael Moorer in April 1994 brings anxiety to this week's proceedings.

The ancient creed by which Holyfield abides does not allow for equivocation. That he has always been prepared to leave the ring on a shield makes people worry for him. Holyfield asks himself, "How many fights have I been in to the point where my will has been tested?" The answer encourages Holyfield to believe that he can stand up to Tyson, one of the most devastating hitters boxing has ever known.

Holyfield will never be remembered by Muhammad Ali and Joe Louis, who were truly big men as well as great talents, or with Rocky Marciano, who was a two-times heavyweight champion he claims a place in history.

"I see greatness in a different way than a lot of people see it," he said this week after completing a lively sparring session. "You're only as great as the guy you fight. Sometimes you win because you're more talented, but there will always be people who step up and meet you

head on. Then it is how you respond to defeat, if it comes, or how you respond to fighting somebody who hits just as hard and keeps coming back at you."

Holyfield has the reputation of a conscientious, hard-striving fighter, the kind who relies mostly on courage and endurance, qualities that are nevertheless evident in the men he admires. "All the fighters who have been considered great are people you couldn't look at and always be sure they would win," he said. "Sometimes they won because of what they were willing to go through. It comes down from Louis, Marciano, Ali, who went in with fighters who were winners too. You don't get a big name in boxing, get all the way to a championship, by overcoming oppo-

'When it is time to examine my career, the names on my record will be important'

nents who choose not to fight. When it is time to examine my career, to figure out where I stand in history, the names on my record will be important."

The most recent is that of Bobby Czyz, no more than a passable imitation of a heavyweight who lasted five rounds last May when he faced Holyfield at Madison Square Garden. "I know I didn't look very good that night," Holyfield said, "but I found it very difficult to get interested. It isn't the same when a fight doesn't appear to be very important. You remember those other nights when there was everything to go for and it affects your concentration. There isn't the same buzz, that feel of uncertainty that helps to get you up for a fight."

Holyfield is not the most forthcoming of men and he finds articulation a problem. "Only time is really going to prove the point, but this fight here will take me to a different level," he added. "People have different perceptions of how

they think a boxer should be and whether they think he has real talent. I think I will be more appreciated when my career is over. Then there will be an understanding that I didn't get hit as often as some may imagine. That I slipped most of the shots."

Fears about Holyfield's health are less relevant to tomorrow's contest than the probability that he is a spent fighter. However, that conclusion does not bother him.

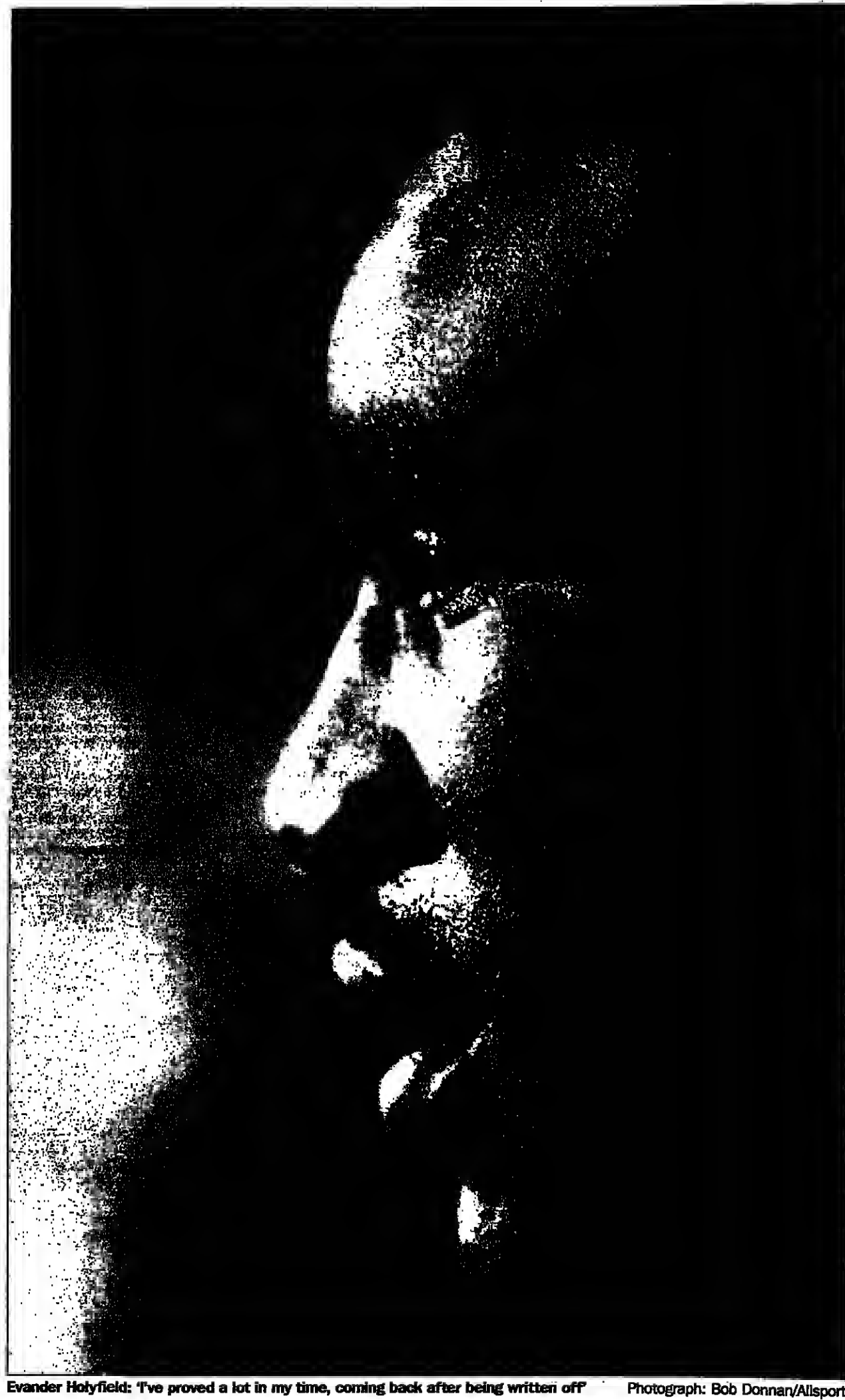
"The same was said before the second fight against Bowe, but I proved to have more than he could handle. I came back when most of the writers thought I was finished."

Two days before that contest at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas, quite late at night, I came across Holyfield in an elevator. He was with the girlfriend he married two months ago and I thought it odd behaviour so close to the contest. The impression you got was that it would be enough to go out against a younger man and prove that he was no quitter. Instead he defeated Bowe, taking advantage of the champion's slowness in preparation.

If Holyfield had lost that fight it is probable that he would have gone into permanent retirement, which is what he should have done anyway. "Maybe," he said, "but I was convinced that I could beat Bowe in the way I'm sure I can surprise everyone by beating Tyson. I've proved a lot in my time, came back after being written off even by people who had believed in me, and it is all about having a positive attitude and putting your trust in God. I'm not suggesting that God is on my side but if I felt He was against me in this I would be out of boxing."

By conservative estimate, Holyfield has grossed more than \$100m (£62,000) in ring earnings and his thrift is legendary. His wedding breakfast was held at a roadside diner. Holyfield does not have the first dollar he ever made but he probably remembers what it was spent on.

What Holyfield will not accept, of course, is that he is about to become another of Tyson's hapless victims. "I think Tyson's beatable," he says. Which is why people worry about him.



Evander Holyfield: 'I've proved a lot in my time, coming back after being written off'

Photograph: Bob Donnan/Allsport

Seles enjoys another easy day at the office

Tennis

Monica Seles, the top seed, made short work of her first match at the Bank of the West Classic in Oakland, California, beating Patricia Hy-Boulais of Canada 6-1, 6-2 in just 60 minutes.

Also winning their second-round matches on Wednesday were the second seed Lindsay Davenport, the fifth seed Brenda Schultz-McCarthy of the Netherlands, Kimberly Po and Linda Wild.

Seles, twice the winner here, dominated from the start, slicing forehands to the corners. She will now face Po in the quarter-finals.

Seles came into the match following a semi-final defeat to Jennifer Capriati in Chicago on Saturday. That setback dropped her from joint world No 1 with Steffi Graf to joint No 2 with Spain's Arantxa Sanchez Vicario.

"After this year is over, I just want to do better at the Grand Slams," Seles said. "Not so much the rankings. Being number one is definitely not a priority in my life any more. It's a bonus."

Despite a sore stomach, Seles looked sharp throughout, smacking winners from both sides and keeping Hy-Boulais off balance from the baseline. "I had no problem playing Saturday but Sunday I had a high temperature. My stomach is still not feeling that well yet," Seles said.

Seles's stiling shoulder, which she has constantly said might require surgery, held up well. This was borne out by a 64 per cent rate on her first serve. "It feels better every day," she said.

"I couldn't tell she had any shoulder problems," Hy-Boulais said. "Monica plays a different game than the rest of the pack. She stays right on top of the baseline and makes you alter a lot of shots."

Seles, who beat Martina Navratilova in her wins here in 1990 and 1992, could meet the other Martina in Sunday's final. Switzerland's Martina Hingis meets Wild in the quarter-finals.

Seles has only one seed, fourth-seeded Mary Joe Fernandez, in her half of the draw. Hingis has Schultz-McCarthy and Davenport in her section.

Atherton against family visits on tour

Cricket

The England captain, Mike Atherton, has appealed to players to keep wives and girlfriends away from this winter's tour of Zimbabwe and New Zealand.

Several players are still believed to be planning to fly in partners during the 14-week tour, which starts on 25 November and includes the Christmas and New Year period. A team meeting was held during England's training trip to southern Portugal this week in an effort to resolve the issue. Atherton and the coach, David Lloyd,

see the trip as vital to the build-up to next summer's Ashes series against Australia.

Atherton said: "We have had a chat about it and there were some strong views aired. We have tried to persuade the players we would like, in this instance, families to stay at home. But there is no clause saying players will be disciplined if wives come out. I don't, however, expect to see any."

However, it is part of a general agreement with Lord's that players should be allowed to be visited by family members during a long tour. More than half

of England's 15-man squad are married, with seven players having small children.

The tour manager, John Barclay, said: "We have nothing against family members coming out, and it's certainly not a policy matter in general terms, but with Christmas coming just a month into the tour we feel in this instance there will not be any organised visits. We feel families coming in alter the focus and atmosphere, and I think everyone can appreciate that what we are trying to do this winter is create a situation where England can be as successful as possible."

Towers facing struggle to qualify

Basketball

RICHARD TAYLOR

One extra second would undoubtedly have given London Towers victory over Verona in their European Cup group game at Wembley Arena on Wednesday night, but instead their 71-64 overtime defeat ples on the pressure for their final four qualifying games.

When Karl Brown saw the game clock clicking down to the

final second he knew there was insufficient time to complete his drive to the basket, and pulled up for a 15-foot jump shot which missed.

The scores stayed tied on 60-60, allowing the Italian club's American Randolph Keys and Danish international Joachim Jerichow to open a match-winning 69-59 lead in overtime as London lost their heads in a barrage of hasty three-point attempts and rash fouls.

They coach, Kevin Cadle, said: "We threw up three or four three-pointers even when we were only a couple of baskets down. We still had time to carry on driving to their basket and scoring or drawing fouls."

Towers are in the final qualifying place, fourth, and must win their two final home games against the clubs below them, Vita Tbilisi, of Georgia, and Podgorica, of Yugoslavia. Victory in either of their away games in Turkey or Hungary would be a bonus.

High noon for Hightown and Trojans

Hockey

BILL COLWILL

Hightown and Trojans, who both shipped goals in shock defeats last weekend, meet tomorrow at Forbury with both teams likely to be missing key players.

Helen Grant, Lucy Newcombe and Caroline Gilbert, European Under-21 bronze medalists in the summer, will again be missing for Hightown, who lost 8-2 at Doncaster, but defender Debbie Mills, who required hospital treatment after a facial injury last week, is expected to be fit. Trojans, who went down 5-0 at home to Clifton, hope Ali Wakefield and Kath James will return.

Leaders Slough entertain Ipswich, trailing by three points in third place. Sally Eyre returns for Slough and the Olympian Anna Bennett is fit again.

Olton and Old Loughtonians, top of the First and Second Divisions respectively and the only two League sides on maximum points, both play their nearest rivals: Wimbledon visit Olton and Old Loughtonians travel to Loughborough to play Students.

Olympics set to lose Hobie and Star

Sailing

STUART ALEXANDER

After three shows of hands and four secret ballots, the choice of boats for the 2000 Olympics in Sydney – and those classes to be excluded – was drafted in Brighton yesterday.

The venerable Star class, in which Britain won gold in 1988, was eclipsed after appearing in 14 Olympics since 1932 and the lobbyists for the Hobie 16 catamaran were reeling from being excluded even from the voting.

Through went the new 49er. Mistral board and 470 dinghies for both men and women, the Tornado cat, the Laser, the Finn, the Europe and the Soling, which will also be the match racer.

The events committee of the International Sailing Federation had kept a packed room waiting for over an hour and a half before it tackled the most exciting subject of the week.

Everyone knew that something had to go to make way for the 49er as the only additional medal in 2000 will be for women's match racing. In stepped America's Tom Ehman.

First he persuaded everyone only to vote for yachts sailed in Savannah in July: collapse of the Hobie party.

Then he secured the boards, the Europe singlehander for women, the Tornado and the exclusion of the Soling from the balloon debate. At which point a wiled and wonderful voting system was proposed by which each of the 18 committee would write down the yacht they would choose to drop and three slips later it was down to the Star and the 470 for men.

This was more fun than sailboat racing, twice as tense and also prone to be inconclusive. Strategy and structure were barely mentioned and choosing on the basis of a programme of events was dismissed. Today the all-powerful council meets to ratify, or not, the committee's decision.

Isabelle Autissier and Hélène Laurent were within a mile of each other after four days of the Vendée Globe single-handed round the world race with Briton's Pete Goss eighth. Tony Bullimore, who returned to Les Sables d'Olonne for steering gear repairs, was due to restart last night.



Howard Wilkinson
on Gascoigne and the dilemma of
problem players, page 26

sport

Holyfield's quest
Ken Jones on Mike Tyson's
brave challenger, page 26

Wright and Sheringham at front of phoney war

Football

IAN RIDLEY
reports from Tbilisi

The day before the day before an England match is always a phoney war and is not to be taken too seriously, certainly not in a city, shell-pocked and short of electricity, where they have known a real one. You know the day was going to get off to a surreal start when a bagpiper – not arranged by Paul Gascoigne – woke the jet-lagged players in the team's hotel at midday.

Glenn Hoddle knows his cap-

tain and his team for tomorrow's World Cup qualifying match against Georgia, but is not saying yet. Thus it becomes a question of looking for clues to the major issues: who will be the striker(s) now that Alan Shearer is injured? Will Tony Adams replace him as captain (and this correspondent says he will)? Will that piper ever blow his pipe down?

Yesterday Teddy Sheringham was called upon to meet the press and Hoddle talked up Ian Wright. The pair for Saturday perhaps, despite the belief that Les Ferdinand, who played against Poland last month, will

surely start? Or misinformation for the eager, friendly Georgian journalists enjoying such openness when their own coach, Alexander Chivadze, is apparently of the Pandora Maxwell school of press relations?

"There is not a player sharper in the Premiership than Ian Wright at present," Hoddle said. "He has great awareness in his running off the ball, added to pace, and still has that killer instinct to score goals." It surely sounded like a pointer, though his predecessor Terry Venables' policy of not being swayed by favours of the month

was ultimately vindicated. Wright's alacrity has brought him 13 goals this season. In European competition, his instincts have brought him 13 goals in 15 matches, but at international level only five in 20. Four were against San Marino, the other as a substitute in a World Cup qualifier in Poland.

In the Premiership, the ball over the top of a defence has reaped handsome rewards and in Europe pace on the counter-attack is invaluable. The massed, positionally astute ranks at international level, where Wright's touch has been

exposed as often uncertain, can negate his strength, however. Surely Sheringham should start, though. His thoughtful worth was finally confirmed during Euro 96, while against Poland last month, when still not fully match fit despite being a substitute, the situation cried out for his deep-lying ability to link midfield and attack. It is an art that often goes unappreciated when compared to all the explosive striking talents the wide-open English game spawns.

"As long as my team-mates and managers appreciate me, that's all that matters," Shering-

ham said. "I am not the sort of guy that picks up the ball on the half-way line, goes past five players and boots it into the top corner. There are different aspects to my game." They are? "That's for me to know and everyone to find out." It was that sort of day.

Whoever Hoddle picks from the six strikers in the squad, he believes that any two should do. "It is a difficult task to blend the right ones for the right night," he said. "Alan Shearer has all-round ability. With the others you have to look at their good points, where the weaknesses of the opposition

are and see which striker can capitalise on that. There is an array of talent, a cutting edge to us," he added. "I always think we are going to score." Wouldn't you know it, the team promptly went on to a training session at the crumbling Lokomotiv Stadium where it seemed a cow's backside would have been safe even if the England players had been a pace away armed with a banjo.

Whatever the personnel, it does seem certain that Hoddle will persist with three at the back. The left wing-back of the coach's first two games, Andy

Hinchcliffe, was also made available for interview and spoke of his admiration for the system. "The position helped me," he said. "You can get forward more and you always have the numbers behind to help out."

Hoddle's main worry yesterday appeared to concern the pitch in the Boris Yeltsin Stadium. It was bumpy and patchy, he said, "though it won't suit Georgia either, because they are a technical side." It was also the day before the day before an away match in a developing country, England Under-21 team.

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Chelsea to pay £5m for Zola

RUPERT METCALF
AND ALAN NIXON

The death last month of their vice-chairman, Matthew Harding, has not, it seems, curtailed Chelsea's spending power. The Stamford Bridge club last night agreed a club-record fee of £5m for Parma's Italian international attacking midfielder, Gianfranco Zola.

According to sources at the Serie A club, the 30-year-old Zola will earn about £25,000 per week as part of his four-year contract with Chelsea, who already have two other Italian internationals in Gianluca Vialli and Roberto di Matteo.

Chelsea's managing director, Colin Hutchinson, flew to Italy yesterday to finalise the deal, which has been agreed between the two clubs although Zola has not yet signed. "We anticipate that he will be doing so in the next few hours," a Parma spokesman said.

Zola replaces Di Matteo, a £4.9m buy from Lazio, as Chelsea's record purchase. He has fallen out with Parma's new coach, Carlo Ancelotti, who said last night: "If he has been able to get a good deal, that's good for us. We're both happy."

The Liverpool striker Stan Collymore is in line for a £20,000 fine – the maximum penalty of two weeks' wages for breach of contract – after refusing to turn out for the Arsenal club's reserve team at Tranmere on Wednesday. That could be doubled if the £8.5m striker carries on his one-man strike tomorrow, when Liverpool's second string are due to meet Sheffield Wednesday.

Collymore's extreme action was explained last night by a

friend who said: "Stan played in a closed-door match against Aston Villa and didn't think he needed another game. He was shocked that Roy Evans told him to play in the reserves on Wednesday. He thinks he has worked extra hard in training and even done more work with the kids."

"Stan told Roy it wasn't fair and that Robbie Fowler got straight back in the team when he was fit and it should be the same for him. I don't know if Stan will play in the reserves on Saturday. In the mood he's in, it is probably unlikely."

Collymore reported for training at Liverpool yesterday and had talks with his agent, Paul Stretford, last night about his future. Aston Villa are interested in the England striker as a possible replacement for the Italy-bound Savo Milosevic.

The Leeds manager, George Graham, has denied reports of a training ground row with his striker Ian Rush, who has failed to score since joining Leeds on a free transfer from Liverpool in the summer.

Niall Quinn, Sunderland's record signing, has been ruled out for the rest of the season with damaged knee ligaments. The £1.3m signing from Manchester City needs an operation after sustaining the injury against Coventry seven weeks ago.

The former Manchester United and England defender Paul Parker has joined Sheffield United on a month's contract. The 32-year-old has just concluded a two-month spell at Derby County.

Rangers have been linked with the 23-year-old Hamburg striker, Karsten Baron.

Chelsea boardroom battle, People and Business, page 24



The Scotland squad in training yesterday at a much-altered Hampden Park for Sunday's World Cup qualifier against Sweden at Ibrox

Photograph: David Ashdown

Scotland must play an Estonian encore

PHIL SHAW

Scotland's hopes of a smooth passage to the World Cup finals were dealt a double blow yesterday. Fila, the governing body of the global game, ordered last month's phantom fixture in Estonia to be replayed, as well as ruling Gary McAllister out of Sunday's Group Four meeting with Sweden in Glasgow.

The tournament's organising committee – chaired by Fila's Swedish vice-president, Lennart Johansson – instructed Scotland to return to the Baltic republic before 16 March next year. Fila will pay the Scots' costs.

Meanwhile, the one-match ban on McAllister, which the Scotland captain understood he had served in Estonia, must be carried over to this weekend's match at Ibrox. Colin Hendry, the official vice-captain, is likely to don the armband de-

spite the fact that John Collins assumed the skipper's duties for the game that never was.

The re-match will take place – "if weather conditions permit," the statement added portentously – in Tallinn, the scene of last month's farcical events. Last night, however, the chief executive of the Scottish Football Association, Jim Farry, warned that rescheduling the trip in an already congested itinerary would not be simple.

While committing the SFA to abide by the decision, Farry said: "My view is that there will be a major difficulty in arranging this match within the timescale set. There is a possibility of a date in December, and one in February, but much could depend on the weather."

The saga began in earnest on the morning of the original game. Acting on representations from the Scots about the quality and positioning of the flood-

lights in the Kadrioru Stadium, the Fila delegate was authorised to bring the kick-off forward by nearly four hours to 3pm local time. Estonia, whose players are part-timers, failed to turn up in protest. A fully kitted-out Scotland side were left to go through the motions of kicking off against non-existent opposition before the referee called a halt after three seconds.

Cast in the unfamiliar and uneasy role of a "big" country, Scotland originally believed they would be awarded a 3-0 walk-over victory. In the meantime, sympathy grew for the Estonians, one of Fila's newer and poorer members, who submitted a 22-page document to the inquiry pleading their case. Disquiet was also expressed by other countries in the section.

Scottish reservations about going back to Tallinn are based on logistical problems rather than any fear of failure (they

stand 25th in Fila's world rankings against Estonia's 112th place, and beat them twice in the last qualifying series). Having sealed out a side in good faith a month ago, Craig Brown, the manager, will be forced to make an additional imposition on the goodwill of the clubs whose charges he effectively borrows.

David Will, the Brechin City director who sits on the organising committee, described McAllister as "the innocent victim". He added: "I'm resigned to the decision and obliged to accept it, though I can't say I'm entirely happy with it. The thing that does surprise me is that the match is going ahead in Tallinn and not at a neutral venue."

The phlegmatic Brown, mindful of the possibility that Scotland might have to return, had sought to play down ill-feeling towards Estonia. Nevertheless he was clearly annoyed at losing his midfield linchpin

for the critical game against the group favourites, Sweden. "It's been galling to hear other nations pronouncing on the issue," he said. "Gary will find it even more galling now that these protests have been successful."

In a statement explaining its decision, Fila noted that Estonia had not shown up for the rearranged kick-off time, but accepted that there were "extenuating circumstances". Its disciplinary committee will con-

sider the possibility of sanctions against the Estonian FA on 23 November.

Sepp Blatter, the general secretary of Fila, claimed the ruling had been made in a "sporting spirit", adding: "Estonia had wanted to play the game. The point was that they did not have enough time to re-organise the arrangements after receiving a fax from Fila at 9am, and this was taken into account."

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THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3130, Friday 8 November By Spurious Thursday's Solution

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Wenger quick to deny rumours

Arsenal's new manager, Arsène Wenger, was yesterday forced into confronting a media pack on the steps of Highgate to deny that he was about to resign – or be sacked – because of rumours concerning his private life.

The 47-year-old Frenchman, who joined Arsenal on 30 September, felt it was time to speak after being told by the Premiership leaders that the club had been besieged by inquiries from press and public.

"If something comes out that is wrong, I will attack," he said. "It is a serious matter if you can just create things that are not right. I am not aware of any allegations."

Brighton fans set for sacrifice

GREG WOOD

Tomorrow will start like any other match day for Graham Talbot. His team is playing at home, and though the opposition – Mansfield Town – is hardly glamorous, these days it rarely is. He will arrive at the ground in good time, hugging and praying, as ever, for victory.

But then Talbot will do something he has not done for 26 years. A supporter of Brighton and Hove Albion, he has not missed a Seagulls game, home or away, in any competition – no, not even the Full Members' Cup – since 1970, but tomorrow he will join many hundreds of his fellow fans in Hove Park, across the road from the Goldstone Ground, in a boycott of

"Nobody who knows me will tell you anything bad about me. I believe you have to respect people in their private life and I have one like everybody else."

Wenger's impromptu declaration followed a bizarre series of events during which an item of idle gossip became viewed as fact. It began with a conversation between a trader in the City of London and a friend with access to one of the information services which supply financial data to the trading floors.

They also carry brief details of sports news and the trader's friend misunderstanding the conversation, released an allegation about Wenger on the service. It was quickly removed but

it was already too late. The culprit responsible for releasing the allegation has since personally apologised to Arsenal.

Wenger, perhaps wishing he had the protection of his own country's strict privacy laws, added: "I do not have to explain anything, but I am sad because Arsenal should be respected and so should I. If you want to know, I have a girlfriend in the south of France who I have lived with for three years. I am very disappointed with the attitude the media here takes."

Mysteriously, a leading book-maker revealed that two weeks ago they began to be inundated with punters wanting to wager that his exit was imminent.

could not have a club next season. It's essential to get the people in charge out."

In a letter to Jimmy Case, Brighton's manager, and his players, the organisers of the boycott say that "we are all behind you and many people gathered outside will be cheering you on as usual. Our anger is directed solely at the board of directors, and we, the paying customers who love the club dearly, will not stand idly by as it is destroyed."

The decision to miss tomorrow's game will be a painful one for many fans, not least Graham Talbot. He will not be the only notable absentee, however. Bill Archer, Brighton's chairman, has not attended a match at the Goldstone for almost 12 months.

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